**University of Alberta**

# Behind the Frontlines: War, Genocide and Identity in the Kherson Region of Ukraine, 1941-1944

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

History

Department of History and Classics

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 2004

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*To My Grandparents*

**Acknowledgements**

This work would not be possible without the help of numerous individuals who supervised my effort or assisted me in various ways in the course of research and writing the thesis. In the first place I would want to thank my supervisor Dr. David Marples, who has been a terrific source of support throughout the two arduous years of Master's program and whose insightful comments improved this work considerably. Intellectually I am most indebted to Dr. John-Paul Himka, whose genuine interest in my work and unparalleled knowledge of Ukrainian and East European history provided direction for my research as well as constantly challenged my arguments. Dr. Dennis Sweeney fostered my interest in social and cultural history and contributed to the general direction of this work at the time when I had only a vague idea of what I was going to write about. Dr. Peter J. Acsay (University of Missouri, Saint Louis) has been a mentor and a loyal friend to whom I owe the very idea of embarking on the graduate studies in history. I thank Dr. Serhiy Yekelchyk (University of Victoria) for his comments on parts of the first chapter.

Numerous people and organizations assisted me during my research in Ukraine. My thanks go to the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta for providing me with Marusia and Michael Dorosh Master's Fellowship that enabled me to spend several months in the State Archives of the Kherson Region. I would like to extend my appreciation to the personnel of State Archives of Kherson region, particularly to Vira Oleksandrivna Baraniuk and Zoria Solomonovna Orlova, who did their best to make my work there enjoyable and archives more accessible. I

am grateful to Liudmyla Zhelyeznyak for organizing a set of interviews and to all residents of the Kherson region who agreed to be interviewed and share not always pleasant memories of the Second World War. Finally I thank graduate students in the Department of History and Classics, University of Alberta for providing a friendly and intellectually vibrant environment that immensely contributed to the successful completion of the program. All these people have credit for the merits these work possesses. Needless to say, all the remaining flaws are mine.

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## Introduction

In mid-March 1944 the thundering "Hurrah!" of the advancing Red Army troops rang over the village Chervonyi Stav not far from Kherson, forcing remaining *Wehrmacht* soldiers to withdraw in panic. Presently, villagers and refugees who had taken shelter in Chervonyi Stav to avoid the forced German-led evacuation from the area came out of their hiding places. Tears mingled with unrestrained jubilation, as civilians welcomed Red Army soldiers as liberators.[1] Widespread in late 1943-early 1944, such reactions were the logical consequence of complex processes of recovering past political loyalties that had been taking place all over the formerly Soviet Ukraine ever since the *Wehrmacht* units occupied the territory in 1941-1942. The following work is a case study of identity transformations in the Kherson region of Ukraine in the period between June 1941 and spring 1944.

There exists a voluminous body of literature that deals with the subject of the Second World War in Ukraine. For both Soviet and Ukrainian Nationalist writers, many of whom themselves participated in those climactic events, the experience of war had always been more than a history. It was an indelible component of their personal identities, a symbol around which revolved mythologies of their respective political communities, allowing continued mobilization of members of their respective polities in an ongoing political struggle.[2] Communist and Ukrainian Nationalist myths of the

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[1] Derzhavnyi arkhiv Khersons'koyi oblasti (DAKhO), f. r-3497, op.1, d.29, l.6.

[2] On the centrality of the myth of the Great Patriotic War to the postwar Soviet society see Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution*. Prineton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Second World War are nearly impossible to reconcile; yet, underlying them are the same rules of narrative construction that emphasize heroism, sacrifice and enemy victimization of members of one's own polity. Therefore it is not surprising that Soviet writers have traditionally concentrated on a limited number of topics, such as operational analysis of battles,[3] brutality of the German occupation or Ukrainian Nationalist atrocities,[4] the Soviet partisan movement and the Communist underground.[5] Simultaneously, more ambiguous episodes of the Second World War, such as everyday life in German occupied territories, the Holocaust and the role of the local population in the destruction of Jews, or brutality of the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine were given short thrift or ignored outright in the Soviet historical literature, as they obviously were deemed a threat to the continued functioning of Communist mythology.[6]

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[3] N.Fokin, et al, eds. *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945*. Moscow: Voenizdat, 1961, 3 vols.

[4] Vitaliy Cherednychenko, *Collaborationists.* Kiev: Politvydav Ukrainy, 1975; Maksim M. Zagorul'ko, Andrei F. Yudenkov, *Krakh plana Oldenburg: O sryve ekonomicheskikh meropriyatiy fashistskoi Germanii na vremenno-okkupirovannoi territorii SSSR*. Moskva: Ekonomika, 1980; Yaroslav Halan, *Lest People Forget: Pamphlets, Articles and Reports.* Kiev: Dnipro Publishers, 1986; Aleksandr Vysotskii, *Zlodeyaniya natsistov na Ukraine, 1941-1944*. Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1987.

[5] Nikolai Starozhilov, *Partizanskie soedineniia Ukrainy v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine.* Kiev: Vyshcha shkola, 1983.

[6] For a more detailed discussion of the Soviet myth of War see Nina Tumarkin. *The Living and the Dead: the Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia.* New York: Basic Books, 1994. About the omission of the Holocaust from official narratives of the War, Amir Weiner "When Memory Counts: War, Genocide and Postwar Soviet Jewry," A.Weiner (ed.), *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003: 167-188.

For their part, Ukrainian Nationalist historians (in the Diaspora and from the late1980s in Ukraine proper) by and large have adopted similar selectivity. Extolling wartime exploits of OUN-UPA and denouncing the repressive Polish and Soviet rule of Western Ukraine, they showed little or no interest in the areas of Ukraine where the Ukrainian Nationalist movement did not take a firm root. Just like their Soviet counterparts, the nationalist writers promulgated their own narratives of victimization, but chose to stay clear of ever mentioning OUN complicity in Jewish pogroms in summer 1941, ethnic cleansing of Poles in Volhynia in 1943, as well as OUN-UPA reprisals against the civilians in the course of bloody power struggle that broke out in Western Ukraine after the second coming of the Soviets.[7]

While Soviet and Ukrainian Nationalist writers engaged in intellectual endeavors that had more to do with the propagation of myths harnessed to serve particular political objectives than with an honest effort to come to terms with the past, the efforts of earlier generations of Western historians were restrained by the lack of access to primary materials in the Soviet archives, as well as by the peculiar research agenda of the Cold War period, responsible for the western scholars' preoccupation with the mistakes of the Third Reich leadership that led to the failures of occupation policies in the East. This notwithstanding, some of those writings are outstanding specimens of history

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[7] Yuri Tys-Krokhmaliuk, *UPA Warfare in Ukraine: Strategical, Tactical and Organizational Problems of Ukrainian Resistance in World War II.* New York: Society of the Veterans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army,1972, Petro Sodol, *They Fought Hitler and Stalin: A Brief Overview of Military Aspects from the History of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1942-1949.* New York: Committee for the World Convention and Reunion of Soldiers in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1987, Wolodymyr Kosyk, *The Third Reich and Ukraine.* New York: P.Lang, 1993.

"from above," providing insightful analyses of German wartime planning and policy-making.[8]

There is also no lack of strong studies dealing with separate aspects of the German occupation of Ukraine. Raul Hilberg's monumental work still remains a standard source of reference for students of the Holocaust.[9] Works by Dieter Pohl,[10] Thomas Sandkuhler[11] and Shmuel Spector[12] document the implementation of the "Final Solution" in Galicia and Volhynia, while Helmut Krausnick[13] and Martin Dean[14] focus

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[8] Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945: A Study in Occupation Policies*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981, 2nd rev.ed., Gerald Reitlinger, *The House Built on Sand: The Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1939-1945*.New York: Viking Press, 1960, Ihor Kamenetsky, *Secret Nazi Plans for Eastern Europe: A Study of Lebensraum Policies*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1961, Ralf Bartoleit, "Die deutsche Agrarpolitik in den besetzten Gebieten der Ukraine vom Sommer 1941 bis zum Sommer 1942 unter besonderer Beruecksichtigung der Einfuehrung der 'Neuen Agrarordnung': eine Studie ueber die die strukturelle Durchsetzung nationalsozialistischer Programmatik" (M.A. thesis, Universitaet Hamburg, 1987), Timothy Mulligan, *The Politics of Illusion and Empire: German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1942-1943*. New York: Praeger, 1988. Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des "Auslaender-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des dritten Reiches*. Berlin-Bonn: Verlag J.H.W.Dietz Nachf,1986.

[9] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. New York: Harper and Row, 1961.

[10] Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*. Muenchen: Oldenbourg, 1996.

[11] Thomas Sandkuehler, *"Endloesung" in Galizien: der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz, 1941-1944*. Bonn: Dietz, 1996.

[12] Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941-1944*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem: Federation of Volhynian Jews, 1990.

[13] Helmut Krausnick, Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges: die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938-1942*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1981.

on the institutions and people engaged in the actual killing. The role of non-Jewish bystanders is examined in some detail in the books by Amir Weiner[15] and Shimon Redlich.[16]

Equally plentiful are studies in the destruction of the Soviet prisoners of war. Christian Streit,[17] Alfred Streim[18] and Christian Gerlach[19] analyze this genocide in the frame of German war objectives and occupation policies, while the recent article by Karel Berkhoff contributes to our knowledge by presenting the events from the perspective of prisoners and civilian population rather than that of the German perpetrators.[20] Still some important questions remain unanswered. What was ideological make-up of people supplying assistance to the POWs? Were they apolitical civilians or

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[14] Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Native Police in Byelorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, and by the same author "The German Gendermerie, the Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft and the "Second Wave" of Jewish Killings in Occupied Ukraine: German Policing at the Local Level in the Zhitomir Region, 1941-1944," *German History* (vol.14, 1996, #2): 168-192.

[15] Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 269-287.

[16] Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919-1945*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002.

[17] Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945*. Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt Stuttgart, 1978.

[18] Alfred Streim, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangenen im Fall "Barbarossa": eine dokumentation unter Beruecksichtigung der Unterlagen der deutschen Strafverfolgungsbehoerden und der Materialien der Zentralen Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklaerung von NS-Verbrechen*. Heidelberg-Karlsruhe: Moeller-Juristischer Verlag, 1981.

[19] Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernaehrung, Voelkermord. Deutsche Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Zuerich-Muenchen: Pendo, 1998.

[20] Karel Berkhoff, "The 'Russian' Prisoners of War in Nazi Ruled Ukraine as Victims of Genocidal Massacre," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (vol.15, issue 1, Spring 2001): 1-32.

ideologically committed members of the Soviet underground? How did the encounters at the camps influence understanding of wartime developments by both POWs and people helping them? How did these cognitive processes shape their political identities? This leads us directly to the question of the relationship between wartime experiences of the population and the emergence of political movements in Ukraine.

Although there exist a few works discussing socio-political dimensions of the Second World War,[21] they tell us precious little about evolution of political identities in the formerly Soviet part of Ukraine. In this sense Karel Berkhoff's doctoral dissertation on daily life in Reichskommissariat Ukraine (RKU) came close to fulfilling the promise of filling the gap, but stopped short of achieving the objective, largely because of the failure to pursue consistently the role of ideological milieu in popular conceptualization of daily experiences of German rule and its impact on the formation of political identities.[22] Over-relying on memoirs of Ukrainian émigrés and German assessment of popular mood to draw conclusions about political loyalties of the population in the RKU, K. Berkhoff passed by in an almost complete silence propaganda of the Soviet underground, whose impact on the attitudes of civilians and POWs was disproportionate to the size of the resistance movement, because of the wave of rumors that such

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[21] John Armstrong, ed. *Soviet Partisans in WWII*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964; also Idem. *Ukrainian Nationalism*. 3d. edition, Englewood, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1990.

[22] Karel Cornelis Berkhoff, "Hitler's Clean Slate: Everyday Life in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, 1941-1944." PhD. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1998.

messages inadvertently generated.[23] Surprisingly, barely mentioned is the fact that Soviet Ukrainians had for more than 20 years lived in the state where the only ideology known to the population was Communist ideology, that through the system of education and innumerable daily rituals penetrated every imaginable venue of social and private life and caused many people to interpret subsequent experiences within its own frame of reference.

The following work is an attempt to analyze grassroots experiences of war inextricable from the ideological component outside which the experiences simply did not exist. The second objective of the thesis is to show how these specific ideologically framed experiences influenced evolution of political loyalties in the Kherson region of Ukraine in 1941-1944. The work consists of three chapters. In the first chapter I analyze the progress of the military campaign in the summer of 1941 and its impact on identity in the Kherson region. Chapter 2 focuses on the local experiences of German genocidal policies between August 1941 and January 1942 and the discourses that these experiences precipitated. Finally, chapter 3, covering the period from January 1942 until March 1944 examines the processes of politicization and "spontaneous" Sovietization taking place in the region under the influence of such diverse factors as individual experiences of German rule, steadily growing popular anti-Germanism, and discourses of the pro-Soviet underground.

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[23] On the impact of the Soviet propaganda see, for example, recent memoir by Dmytro Malakov, *Oti dva roky: u Kyievi pry nimtsiakh*. Kyiv: Vydavnychyi Dim "Amadei," 2002: 148.

This work draws heavily on the materials from the State Archives of the Kherson Region. Among the documents consulted are files of the German Gebietskommissar, materials of district and village auxiliary administration, as well as documents from the files of the auxiliary police. Soviet sources are represented by the reports of the Commission for the Investigation of Crimes of German Fascist and their Helpers, testimonies of Khersonians on the Holocaust and destruction of the POWs, Communist Party files on the resistance activities in the region, as well as memories of schoolchildren about their experiences during the Second World War recorded in fall 1944. I also consulted *Holos Dnipra (Voice of the Dnieper)*, the newspaper issued by the German authorities in Kherson in 1941-1943 and contemporary Kherson newspapers that contain personal accounts and reprints of documents on the topic of the Second World War in the region. Finally, important sources of information were an unpublished manuscript of Boris Vadon, currently at the Kherson regional Library and three interviews that I conducted with the residents of the area in August and September 2003.

Throughout this paper I consistently used the standard Ukrainian transliteration to render in English place names as well as the names of people, whose native language has been identified as Ukrainian. To render in English names of Russians and Russophone Ukrainians, I used Russian transliterations.

## Chapter 1

### The Eclipse of the Red Star: Summer 1941 and Disintegration of the Soviet Body Politic

"The picture that I found at home was distressing. They knew nothing about brother Dmitriy, my father and his school children were somewhere harvesting and for the whole month the rest of my family heard nothing from them. Because the head of the education board had run away, the teachers did not receive money for the last month of work, and now there was no money at home. To make matters worse, my young brother Boris was begging to let him go to war. Mother was desperate. I prohibited the 14-year-old brother from talking such nonsense. Two hours later the dirty, unshaven father stepped in. It turned out he and his students walked 150 kilometers to get back to Kherson."[24]

So wrote Georgii Tsedrik, a Red Army soldier, who in August 1941 stopped to visit his family in Kherson. Images of chaos, confusion and a mounting sense of insecurity arising from this story became a permanent fixture of everyday life in this Ukrainian city in the last days before it fell under the German and Romanian military occupation. The objective of the following chapter is to provide an analysis of major military, political and social developments that saw a gradual transformation of Ukraine's Kherson region, a quiet backwater in June 1941, into the abode of confusion and desperation that Georgii Tsedrik found less than two months later, inside of which

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[24] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, ll.11-12.

conflicts were ripening and all sorts of dramas were unfolding. It is my intention to show how the first hand experience of the War, Soviet reprisals against groups deemed politically unreliable, and the emerging awareness of the reality of the Soviet military defeat in August 1941 radically reconfigured the shape of the heretofore more-or-less ideologically uniform Soviet body politic, wreaking in it numerous fractures that were barely discernible in June 1941. Because of the lack of primary accounts portraying evolution of popular attitudes, my intention is to document identity transformations in Kherson region over the summer and fall by citing the actions to which the people resorted in the weeks prior to the German arrival and shortly thereafter. I will argue that the "reality" of the war presented itself to Khersonians gradually through massive army and labor mobilization, through frightening and ever more frequent aerial bombardments, resulting in the first civilian casualties, through a trickle-turned-into-a-flood of refugees, wounded and retreating soldiers, through the panicky withdrawal of the Soviet authorities and the dramatic period of the interregnum and finally through the arrival of Him, the German Soldier. These experiences were a shock to the population that confronted them with a set of choices. I will argue that for the majority of the people questions of personal survival came to the fore, simultaneously pushing to the fringe the obligation to defend the motherland. By fall 1941 the unity of the Soviet people rising up in arms against the foreign invasion was a thing of the past, as many locals, including some Communists and Komsomol members, lost faith in the viability of the Soviet government. Within this large group some opportunists jumped on the German bandwagon and became full-fledged collaborators, while many others simply withdrew to the private realm, attempting to weather the gathering upheaval.

Only members of a third group persisted in their belief in the ultimate victory of Soviet arms.

The war with Nazi Germany came as a surprise to many people in Kherson and adjacent areas. To Lidiya Mel'nykova at least, the quiet sunny morning of June 22, 1941 did not seem out-of-the ordinary. Just as the German task forces were overriding Soviet border outposts and marching deeply into Soviet territory, the 12 year-old girl and her father were inside their house, attending to some chores, when the mother told the family what she had heard from their neighbors, namely that just hours earlier the German army had invaded Soviet territory. The idea of Nazi Germany attacking the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the time seemed so outlandish to this Kherson family that after a brief discussion Lidiya's parents went on to dismiss the news as "a piece of rumor originated by some and transmitted by the others".[25] Newspapers that morning did not contain any mention of the war. It took Molotov's famous radio speech in the afternoon for the Mel'nykovs and many fellow Khersonians to realize finally that the war between Germany and her Allies on one side and the Soviet Union on the other was more than a malicious rumor.[26] Following Soviet press coverage of the campaign and conducting endless conversations about its progress in the outwardly peaceful atmosphere of their southern city in June 1941, probably only a few Khersonians anticipated the impact this climactic event would exert over the course of world history, and more significantly over their own lives. In just a few weeks, for many residents of

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[25] DAKhO f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l. 11.

[26] Ibidem.

Kherson the sunny morning of June 22 would turn into an ultimate divide that irrevocably split their lives into "then" and "now" and force them to think over the nature of this confrontation and their place in it.[27]

Immediately upon the German invasion of the Soviet territory, in the Kherson region as elsewhere in the USSR there began a general mobilization of men of draft age for service in the Red Army. The task of mobilizing the human resources for military service was performed by the military boards (*voenkommaty*), which operated in every district center throughout the country. The military boards would send out official calls *(povestki)* to eligible people to show up for medical examination and later to report to the specifically designed collection points (*sbornye punkty*). There the recruits would be deprived of their passports,[28] apparently a preventive measure against desertion, and directed to their respective units, where they were supposed to get military equipment and undergo some training. Another task that the military boards performed in co-operation with the NKVD was to create and train detachments of people's militias or

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[27] A young Khersonian Hryts' Panchenko, apparently a native Ukrainian speaker, mentioned that he was fascinated by the war and followed the progress of the campaign as reflected in Soviet newspapers, noting with regret that the Soviet Army was on the retreat. (DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 2, l.5).

[28] That the Soviet authorities divested the recruits of their passports becomes transparent from the documents of Skadovs'k auxiliary police. In 1942-43 the Germans obliged all natives to register and obtain passports, if they did not yet have them. In their applications all former POWs and deserters and now agricultural workers in Skadovs'k district, evoked the same detail, namely that the passports were taken from them by military boards in summer 1941 (DAKhO, f. r-1578, op.1, d.1, ll. 5-7, 10-14, 20-21). Curiously enough, this element of Soviet mobilization policy must have saved a lot of non-native captives from the horror of the POW camps in 1941-1942 when the German military released a lot of native POWs to work in the strategically important agriculture. Having no identification on them meant that under certain circumstances, e.g. bribing local policemen or starosta, they could be released from POW camps. On this issue see Chapters 2 and 3.

destruction battalions for the maintenance of order and the protection of strategic sites in the rear against enemy parachutists. In the city of Kherson the destruction battalion, consisting of Communist workers from the Komintern Shipyards and Petrovskii plant, came into existence in July.[29]

As sources make clear, the German invasion and the calls of the Soviet leadership for the people to unite in the struggle against the "Fascist enemy" did not go unheeded, creating an upsurge of patriotism in the land. Everywhere one finds civilians voluntarily joining the armed forces or people's militias. Georgii Tsedrik, a Kherson native, who worked as an engineer at Andre Marti shipyards and studied in the evening class at the Mykolayiv Shipbuilding Institute, joined the local destruction battalion. He wanted to go to the front as a volunteer, but because the Mykolayiv shipyards placed him on the list of indispensable workers, no military board would want to draft him. According to Tsedrik, he had to invest a considerable amount of effort to enlist with the bicycle battalion that was being formed in Mykolayiv and managed to do so only after he quit his job at the shipyards, a striking example of the autonomy of an individual citizen of an allegedly all-intrusive totalitarian state in times of travails.[30] According to statistical data collected by the Mykolayiv regional Committee of the Communist party, by July

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[29] According to I. Kirillov, the then military commandant of Kherson, in the city there came into being several units of people's militia and a destruction battalion that soon blended together. While some 250 militias engaged in keeping order and guarding strategic sites in the city, the majority of people were moved to Mykolayiv to participate in the construction of defensive networks *Khersonskaya oblast v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny 1941-1945*. Simferopol', 1975: 77. On August 19, the destruction battalion from Kherson was transferred to Tsirupyns'k, where it soon formed the nucleus of the partisan detachment under the command of Emelian Girskii. About this group see Chapter 2 of this work.

[30] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, ll.11-12.

21, 1941 29,869 people had volunteered for the Red Army and people's militia in the fourteen districts that are now part of the Kherson region.[31] What is interesting, of these only 2,935 were Communists, 5,064 Komsomols and 9,780 comprised women. A simple arithmetical operation allows us to see that the largest single group, comprising 12,090 people, was made up of men who were neither Communist party nor Komsomol members,[32] which serves as an additional evidence that by 1941 the allegiance to the Soviet cause spread well beyond the confines of the Communist party and its youth affiliates.[33] The outburst of patriotism on the part of younger people seems to have gone hand in hand with the eagerness of some older citizens, who had children serving in the Red Army, to partake in the war effort. A 50-year-old *kolkhoznik* from Kalinindorf District, Mogilevskii, wrote: "I have two sons in the Red Army. In my letters I tell them to fight the enemy and not to worry. My old woman and I will work in the fields, as long as we have strength".[34] Another kolkhoznik, Draizman, said that he had four sons in the Red Army; therefore he would work, sparing no effort.[35]

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[31] In 1941 the city of Kherson and many of the districts of today's Kherson region were part of Mykolayiv region. The Kherson region came into being after the expulsion of the Axis troops from the area in March 1944.

[32] Bizer M. et al eds. *Khersonskaya oblast v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1944 gody*. Odessa: Mayak, 1968: 51. Although caution is normally advised when using Soviet collections of wartime documents, in this case I think the numbers are credible, because the data for Kalinindorf district reflected in this document replicate the numbers published by I.Shaikin and M. Ziabko, who were using materials of the Central State Archives of Civic organizations of Ukraine (TsDAHOU) in Kyiv. See their "Natsystskii Genotsid v evreiskikh zemledel'cheskikh koloniyakh yuga Ukrainy" in Elisavetskii (ed.), *Katastrofa i soprotivlenie Ukrainskogo evreistva*, Kiev, 1999: 154-155.

[33] See Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 239-297.

[34] cited in Shaikin, Ziabko "Natsistskii genotsid,"155.

The idealistic drive of these elderly *kolkhozniks* soon found an institutional framework, in which it could be converted into tangible material results. The massive mobilization of adult men into the armed forces throughout summer 1941 created a vacuum in the region's labor force, which made it imperative for the Soviet authorities to engage the rest of the population in the so-called labor army (*trudarmiya*), whose ageing, teenage, and sometimes even female members would be put to work collecting the harvest or preparing trenches, anti-tank ravines and other sorts of defensive fortifications. Frequently, people mobilized in this manner, would spend months working dozens of kilometers away from home in dire living conditions, with their relatives having little or no idea about their location.[36] Not unlike Soviet soldiers at the front the mobilized workers frequently became subject to German propaganda. Leaflets, generously strewn about by German planes, among other things called on the Ukrainian civilians, more specifically women, to quit their work in view of the ultimate uselessness of their effort in the face of German military superiority.[37] This earlier "leaflet barrage", unlike German propaganda efforts in subsequent years, proved quite

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[35] Ibidem.

[36] For example Elizavetta Kliuchareva's father worked in the construction of fortifications near Nova Odessa, now in Mykolayiv region, located some 160 km from Kherson. There he got very sick and was released from duty. DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.20-21; Also DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, ll.11-12.

[37] The text of one of such leaflets written in decent Russian read "*Milye damochki ne roite eti yamochki, a to nashi tanochki zaroyut vashi yamochki"* (Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, August 13, 2003); For a general overview of the German propaganda campaign directed against the Soviet Union and its army, see Ortwin Buchbender, *Das Tönende Erz: Deutsche Propaganda gegen die Rote Armee im Zweiten Weltkrieg,* Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1978.

effective. It would discourage a considerable number of Red Army soldiers from continuing fighting and prevent many civilians from evacuation in the face of the German occupation of the area. More importantly German propaganda was one of the factors that worked to fragment the Soviet polity, providing among other things a discourse, in which some locals, particularly peasants, were able to express some of their grievances against the Soviet system as such, rather than against its particular agents.

However, it was the Soviet authorities that made the first contributions to the future fragmentation of the local society. While the Soviet state was attempting to rally the population to the Soviet cause and to secure all available manpower for the war effort, it did not relinquish the role of a "gardener" that it took upon itself in the preceding decades.[38] In 1941 Kherson, much like in previous years, the Soviet authorities' claimed a monopoly of defining and cultivating citizens worthy of trust, as well as separating and sometimes "weeding" out those that appeared unreliable or even outright hostile. Despite the Soviet internationalist and class rhetoric, the nationality of the person in question was a most frequently applied criterion that often served as an indicator of loyalty and a decisive factor in determining who was allowed to participate in the popular displays of Soviet patriotism and who was to be explicitly excluded from them. One of the people who experienced the hand of the "gardening state" was a young nurse of Polish extraction Janina Sadlij. Sometime in summer 1941 she went to

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[38] On recent discussions of the "gardener" state, see Amir Weiner (ed). *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework,* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. On the specifically Soviet case see A. Weiner, "Nature, Nurture and Memory in the Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism," *American Historical Review* (vol. 104, #4, October 1999): 1114-1155.

the military board in Kherson with a request to take her as a nurse into the regular army, but the city military kommandant refused to draft her on account of her Polish nationality. Such lack of trust deeply affected the young woman—"I did not remember how I made it home, I was blind from tears."[39] Curiously enough this negative experience did not make Sadlij less patriotic. However, some Khersonians were less generous than the idealistic young nurse. Of these people ethnic Germans unquestionably made up the largest group. Although the Soviet authorities would habitually use *Volksdeutsche* for labor assignments of all sorts, from August 1941 only a limited number of ethnic Germans were allowed to fight in the combat formations at the front.[40] Summer 1941 witnessed a number of arrests and a continuum of conspiracy paranoia so characteristic of the preceding decades, of which ethnic Germans with their ambiguous identities became victims. One Aleinikov, an employee of one of the Kherson hospitals, in a conversation with the same Janina Sadlij in August 1941, described the fate of the *Volksdeutsche* pharmacist Specht, whom they had both known, in the following way: "They would not take *you* because of your nationality (meaning into the army), but they did take him, to the NKVD."[41] These isolated arrests notwithstanding, because of the rapidity of the German advance the Soviet punitive organs failed to carry out a coordinated campaign of deporting the *Volksdeutsche*

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[39] Harrii Zubris, "Ne Zaroslo Travoyu Zabuttia: Pamyati akusherky Sadlij," *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, 21 September, 1995.

[40] Meir Buchsweiler *Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine am Vorabend und Beginn des Zweiten Weltkriegs—Ein Fall Doppelter Loyalität*? Stuttgart: Bleicher Verlag, 1984: 277.

[41] Zubris, "Ne zaroslo travoyu zabuttia," *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, 21 September, 1995.

settlements deep into Soviet-held territory, as they would do in the areas lying further east.[42] It is not at all clear how pro-German Ukraine's Volksdeutsche actually were in summer 1941 and how well grounded were Soviet accusations of disloyalty. One of the most distinguished historians of ethnic Germans has argued that above all else, the attitudes of ethnic Germans in this period were structured by fear of the largely hostile local population and the potential reprisals of the NKVD.[43] Seen from this perspective, the welcome[44] that the *Wehrmacht* would receive in many of the ethnic German settlements appears to have expressed a sense of deliverance from danger and the rejection of the Soviet order rather than a positive embrace of Nazism, of which the *Volksdeutsche* doubtless had a very limited knowledge in August-September 1941.[45]

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[42] The resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to this effect appeared only on August 28, 1941. According to M. Buchsweiler by this time the Wehrmacht units had already occupied the territory, on which 75-80 % of Volksdeutsche lived before the war. This area included the city of Kherson and large German settlements in Beryslav district (Buchsweiler, *Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine*, 280). In January 1942 in 5 districts of Right Bank Kherson region there lived between 8 and 9,000 ethnic Germans (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.11).

[43] For a detailed account of the German question in the Soviet Union before the Second World War, see also Ingeborg Fleischhauer, Benjamin Pinkus and Edith Frankel, *The Soviet Germans: Past and Present*. New York: St.Martins Press, 1986.

[44] DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1. d.4, l.23.

[45] This, of course, does not mean that some of the ethnic Germans did not proceed later to re-discover their seemingly long-lost Germanness and enjoy the benefits that it offered. Valentina Zamiralova(Gubenko) in her interview with the author told about the Russo phone *Volksdeutsche* policeman in Kherson, who used to boast about his rediscovered German identity: "I have always known that I have a German heart," a comment that would repeatedly cause a storm of indignation among his Ukrainian women neighbors. One of them once resorted to a most grotesque way of expressing her anger. She leaned forward, raised her skirt and exposing her naked buttocks exclaimed "That's where your German heart is." (Interview with Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), Kherson, September 9, 2003). Also one should not overlook the positive image of Nazi Germany in some Volksdeutsche settlements of the Southern Ukraine going back to

More important for the fate of Soviet Ukrainian society in the first months of the war were events other than the limited arrests of *Volksdeutsche*. Significantly, unlike many large Ukrainian cities, Kherson did not know much about the war for a long time, carrying some resemblance of peaceful existence and with it patriotic unity into the second month of the war. From mid-July, however, the picture rapidly began to change, as hundreds of civilian refugees from Bessarabia and Western parts of Ukraine, as well as streams of Red Army wounded reached the city. Soon German planes paid their first visit to Kherson, dropping bombs on the port and industrial installations, which resulted in the first civilian casualties and aggravated the state of an increasingly nervous population.[46] A Komsomol member Muza Kovaleva, a volunteer nurse and herself a refugee from Bessarabia, remembered Kherson in early August, 1941:

> The city was already living a nervous chaotic life. Everywhere one observed haste and confusion, more and more wounded people, crowds of evacuees. Our group was ordered to unload the steamboat "Kotovskii" that brought a large number of wounded military from Odessa. We were expecting the arrival of the boat… Soon the boat came around. The lightly wounded soldiers on the deck were joking, "Look they are giving us a welcome, and the only problem is a lack of strength" (apparently hinting at girls' fragility). But we were not any worse than male nurses. All the station and the port were full of the wounded. Suddenly an alarm went off; soon we heard the noise of the planes. Everybody started running around, but the planes went towards the Crimea. Groans and suffering around. There was a young soldier complaining about a pain in

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early 1930s. As some sources make it clear, in 1932-1933 when the famine devastated Ukrainian villages without any note of the nationality of their residents, Nazi Germany was the only foreign power that acknowledged the fact of the famine in Soviet Ukraine and extended food assistance to the starving Soviet Germans. Some colonists, however, concerned with potential reprisals, declined this assistance (see Vasyl Marochko "Holodomor v Ukraini: prychyny i naslidky (1932-1933), *Osvita* (#21, 1993): 3-9; Buchsweiler, *Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine*, 222-232).

[46] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 32, l.100; Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko) told of her woman neighbor named Hladyr', who got killed by a German bomb, as she was walking to the food store (Interview with Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), Kherson, September 9, 2003).

the leg that had already been amputated. Next to him lay an elderly soldier, suffering from a head wound. He was light-headed, calling his Halia, begging her to lock up the cow or else she would walk away, and then he began to call his children.[47]

The appearance of these first victims of the war was significant at least in one respect. More than anything else casualties of German air raids, refugees from the Western regions and the scores of wounded military brought home the idea that the war was very close indeed, more close than Soviet newspapers of the time or the upbeat Soviet *Informburo* reports suggested. The already uncomfortable apprehension of the possible foreign occupation must have been accentuated by refugees fleeing from the Romanian occupied Bessarabia (now part of Moldavia), who almost certainly brought with them rumors of the atrocities that the German units of the Einsatzgruppe D and the Romanian security police visited on Jews and Communists there.[48] This information combined with Soviet reports about Nazi war crimes,[49] for the first time confronted both the Soviet functionaries and the population at large with a dilemma, with which Red Army soldiers and civilians in Western regions of the country had been struggling for some time. These personal struggles for many revolved around the question of how

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[47]DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 32, l.102.

[48] For a general overview of the Einsatzgruppe D activities during the war, see Andrej Angrick, "Die Einsatzgruppe D" in Peter Klein, (hg), *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42: Die Taetigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*. Berlin: Hentrich Edition, 1997: 88-110.

[49] For a more detailed account of the impact of Soviet atrocities stories on the indigenous population, see Mordechai Altshuler, "Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews at the time of the Nazi Invasion" in L.Dobroczycki and J. Gurock (eds.), *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941-1945.* New York-London: M.E.Sharpe, 1993: 77-104.

to reconcile the natural instinct of self-preservation with an acquired Soviet identity that demanded action in defense of the Soviet state, the anchor of this identity. The only way, in which the two impulses could be harmonized, seemed to lie in the evacuation of the area.[50]

The conventional view of the evacuation in summer 1941 is a story of success that enabled the Soviet leadership in a very short period of time to move much of its industrial potential to the East, which subsequently allowed the Soviet people to defeat the enemy.[51] The problem with this and similar interpretations of the Soviet policy of evacuation, as Mordechai Altshuler points out, is that it concentrates almost exclusively on industrial relocation, which indeed seems to have been quite successful, and conspicuously ignores the remarkable failure of the Soviet authorities to evacuate the

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[50] Some scholars in Ukraine have argued that before the arrival of the refugees from Bessarabia the Jews in South Ukraine did not seriously contemplate evacuation to the East. The implication of this statement is that non-Jews had even less incentive to leave their homes. See Shaikin, Ziabko, "Natsistskii Genotsid," 155; I agree with the authors on this count and find such attitudes of the civilian population unsurprising given the extremely low level of their awareness of the situation at the front. At the time when even military commanders on the ground frequently made sense of the military situation with the help of the overly optimistic official reports, the belief of the patriotic section of civilians in the Red Army's ultimate invincibility, which made the evacuation unnecessary, seems only logical. Mykola Pavlovs'kyi, who in 1941 resided in the district center Velyka Lepetykha, told the author that with the benefit of hindsight they did not really know what was going on. He also mentioned the politruk of the Red Army unit stationed in their village who would come to Pavlovs'kyi's parents' house to listen to the radio report about the situation at the front (Interview with Mykola Andriyovych Pavlovs'kyi, Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, September 11, 2003).

[51] See for example John Barber and Mark Harrison: "The results of the industrial evacuation were of critical importance for success of the Soviet war effort. It supplied the Red Army with the essential means of survival in the winter 1941, without which nothing could have been done," in *The Soviet Home front 1941-1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II.* London-New York: Longman, 1991: 131.

population, more specifically Jews and rank and file Communists from the areas that would soon be occupied.[52] The following section of the paper will analyze the progress of the organized evacuation and spontaneous efforts to flee from the Kherson region in summer 1941.

By early August the situation in the Southern sector of the front became considerably worse for the Red Army. The units of the 11th German Army, supported by two Romanian armies and a Hungarian corps managed to drive a wedge between the Soviet 9th and Maritime Armies (*Primorskaya Armiya)*, forcing the former hectically to retreat in the direction of Mykolayiv, and pushing the latter towards Odesa. The situation became desperate, as Odesa came under siege on August 8 and the 9th Army got encircled near Mykolayiv on the 13th and was barely able to break out two days later, apparently at the cost of serious casualties.[53] In view of the extremely dangerous situation at the front and increased pressure from the incoming streams of retreating army units and civilian refugees, the Mykolayiv *obkom*[54] belatedly on August 5 created a regional evacuation commission, a step that led to the relocation of the most important industrial enterprises and the population from the region.[55] Over the next few days the evacuation commissions began their operation in district centers, including Kherson. Commissions also appeared at plants and other big enterprises. One of the

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[52] Altshuler, "Escape and Evacuation", 78.

[53] N.Fokin et al, eds. *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945*. Moskva: Voenizdat, 1961, v.2: 103.

[54] (from Russian) "oblastnoi kommitet kommunisticheskoi partii"—the regional committee of the Communist party.

[55] Shaikin, Ziabko, "Natsistskii Genotsid,"155.

major enterprises in Kherson that the Soviet authorities attempted to evacuate into the deep of Soviet territory was the Petrovskii plant. The enterprise, which before 1940 produced agricultural machinery and electric engines, henceforth and particularly after June 22, 1941 was increasingly oriented to producing military related equipment and armaments, e.g. air bombs and hand grenades that were immediately sent to the army units.[56] The industrial relocation and evacuation proceeded successfully, within the limitations permitted by the lack of transportation until August 13. By that time, according to A. Gusakov, in 1941 a worker at the plant and a participant in the destruction battalion, most of the equipment of the Petrovskii plant and other large enterprises was disassembled and despite the frightening scarcity of transportation shipped into the rear, accompanied by a considerable section of the plant employees and their family members.[57] There logically arises the question why the Soviets managed successfully to relocate industrial enterprises from the city, and yet failed to move east much of the valuable workforce. My analysis of grass-roots developments suggests that responsibility for the overall Soviet failures in this sphere lay with a fairly complex interplay of objective limitations with which the Soviet authorities were struggling, such as time constraints and the deficit of transportation and more subjective reluctance of many civilians to evacuate, albeit for different reasons.

Because of the lack of trucks and freight capacities, in deciding the priorities of transport allocation, the local evacuation commissions relied on their assessment of the importance of separate individuals for the overall war effort. Thus the priority naturally

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[56] DAKhO, f. r-3562, op.2, d. 47, ll.1-2.

[57] Ibidem, ll.3-4.

went to leading Communist party and state functionaries, managerial personnel of the enterprises and members of their families. The next place in this improvised hierarchy was occupied by skilled workers, who were usually evacuated together with their enterprises, while all other categories of civilians, including rank and file Communists and Jews not affiliated with important industries, figured rather low on the priority scale. Indeed, it seems that it was difficult to obtain an evacuation document guaranteeing a place on a train or a truck for someone, whose enterprise was not being evacuated.[58] As some authors have shown, the initiative and inventiveness of some local leaders and Red Army officers could alleviate the situation and facilitate the removal of a larger number of civilians,[59] but such incidents, successful as they were, are exceptions to the rule, and only serve to illustrate the general gravity of the transportation deficit that forced local leaders to come up with genuine solutions.

Analyzing social aspects of the evacuation policy and escape efforts in summer 1941 one is bound to address another important aspect, namely a widespread unwillingness of the locals to move for a wide variety of reasons. One was that some people, also Soviet loyalists and Jews, strange as it might seem, believed that the dangers on the road were far greater than the ones they would encounter living under the Germans, a clear indication that for some of these people patriotism ended where safety of their own and of their family members was at stake. Janina Sadlij, whom I

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[58] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.11.

[59] I.Shaikin and M.Ziabko, mention the kolkhoz chairman from the Jewish Autonomous District Kalinindorf, Bibe by name, who managed to negotiate with the Red Army unit commander about the crossing of the Dnieper by his kolkhozniks, using this unit's bridging equipment, which, as it turned out, saved their lives. (see Shaikin, Ziabko, "Natsistskii genotsid,"157).

introduced earlier in this chapter and who, as a nurse at one of Kherson's better hospitals, was acquainted with a number of Jewish doctors, provided an insightful perspective on why some of them chose to stay:

> Kogan thought the Germans would not touch him. He had studied in Germany, and knew the language well. Two of his brothers were shot in 1937 as "German spies." I till can't grasp how they did not shoot Kogan himself. He was cursing the Soviet authorities everywhere he went. Baumholz's daughter-in-law was in the 9th month of pregnancy. They were afraid to start on the road, and Baumholz did not believe the Germans would start shooting the Jews. In addition, their daughter in law was Russian. Polina Aizenshtock was poor, but a beauty. I don't understand why they did not draft her into the army hospital, for they did take Jews, unlike Poles and Germans. She must have stayed because of her old and blind mother. Khasin did not go because he was almost 80 years old. Sara Abramovna Yudkevich was persuaded to stay by her Russian husband, a lawyer, whose favorite saying was "Vodka in the pail and money in the pocket make a man strong.[60]

However, even the initial decision and the possibility of flight did not mean the mission could be successfully completed. Maria Bohats'ka's family was supposed to evacuate together with the Komintern shipyards where her father worked, but shortly before their departure time Maria's mother got seriously ill and they all had to stay.[61] Even more dramatic was the experience of the Kirov kolkhoz from Kalinindorf. In August 1941 the mostly Jewish *kolkhozniks* reached the Dnieper near the village of Kachkarovka (Beryslav district). It turned out that the ferry had been destroyed. They had to camp five kilometers from Beryslav. Kolkhoz chairman Leib Barendorf went towards Kherson on a reconnaissance mission to look for some sailing devices to facilitate the crossing. Left without leadership and experiencing all sorts of discomfort under the burning sun for three days, people began to panic. Some "optimists"took over

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[60] Zubris, "Ne Zaroslo Travoyu Zabuttia," *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, 21 September, 1995.

[61] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.7.

and convinced people that simple *kolkhozniks* had nothing to fear. The people returned home.[62] The effects of German propaganda become more obvious from the testimony of Etya Shatnaya, who was evacuating from the village Lenindorf, now in Tsirupyns'k district. Her father was escorting the kolkhoz cattle. The family followed him. They rode in carts dragged by oxen, but mostly walked, for they had to drive the cattle:

> In the village Kakhivshchyna we met Red Army soldiers, who began saying "Why are you still driving the cattle? Save your lives! The German planes dropped us leaflets reading "Peasants surrender! Stalin's elder son Yakov has surrendered. We do not harm anybody, but Jews and Communists." We moved further, but some peasants returned. Among them were also Jews, who perished later.[63]

Finally, the German military activities could become the factor that made further evacuation impossible. Nina Sliashina and her parents were evacuating from Skadovs'k in a steamboat. But as the boat covered some 30 km, it came under attack from German planes and from the damage sustained the vessel began to sink. Although people were saved by a motor boat, Nina and her mother had little choice but to return home, while the motor boat took her father to Sevastopol' and from there they moved him to Astrakhan', where he worked as a deputy director of some unspecified enterprise.[64]

The overall result of the complex interaction between objective technical limitations and dynamic processes of decision-making by the local authorities and individuals, as well as pure accidents thus accounted for the fact that thousands of

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[62] Shaikin, Ziabko, "Natsistskii genotsid," 158.

[63] *Evreiskie Vesti*, #21-22 November 1993: 15. The text of the German propaganda leaflet drawing on Stalin's son's experience can be found in Ortwin Buchbender, *Das Tönende Erz: Deutsche Propaganda gegen die Rote Armee im Zweiten Weltkrieg.* Seewald Verlag: Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1978: 65-71.

[64] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 31, ll.2-3.

Soviet loyalists, potential victims of Nazism, Communists and Jews, did not evacuate from the area.[65]

Whatever coordinated evacuation of Kherson enterprises and civilian population there was early on, it ground to a complete halt after August 13. On that day crowds of battered and demoralized soldiers of the 9th army retreating from Mykolaiv reached the area and streamed towards crossings over the Dnieper at Kherson and Beryslav, abandoning the remnants of their equipment, their wounded comrades and spreading panic.[66] Georgii Tsedrik, whose unit was withdrawn from Mykolayiv on August 12, documented the state of the soldiers from his battalion, as they were going through the Kherson region in mid-August, 1941:

> We did not have any plan of retreat. At first we were moving towards Znamyanka, then towards Heniches'k and Berdyans'k. We ate what kolkhozniks gave us. The soldiers looked like a motley crew, as they did not have a common uniform. The weapons were also different. Some had Polish or German rifles; there were a few Polish machine guns. Half of the soldiers received requisitioned bikes. German planes never tired of bombing our unit. The permanent retreat undermined morale. Cases of desertion began to increase.[67]

Desertion, as mentioned by Tsedrik became common in this part of the country; however, it was only one form of "disengagement" from further action, in which Soviet

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[65] Documents found in the mass grave near the village Zelenivka 10 km east of Kherson point to a large number of Jewish refugees from Bessarabia and Western Ukraine (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, ll.5-7). On the other hand, the lists compiled by the auxiliary administration in the Kherson countryside are an indication that we are dealing with hundreds of rank and file Communists and Komsomol members that fell under German occupation (DAKhO, f.r-1501, op.3, d.10, p.100; DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.35, d.1, ll.138-139). For more detail on this topic see Chapters 2 and 3 of this work.

[66] "From the Report about the Military Operations of the Danube Flotilla", *Trybuna* #34, August 9-15, 1991.

[67] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, ll.11-12.

soldiers expressed their unwillingness to continue fighting. Other forms of disengagement were voluntary surrender and refusal to attempt to reunite with the Red Army after getting left behind in battles. Some sources interpreted the "disengagement" from further action as a sign of inherent disloyalty of Red Army soldiers to the Soviet state. The problem with these sources is that they tend mechanistically to link the finite acts of desertion or voluntary surrender with the events of the past, such as collectivization, famine, purges etc. that allegedly turned Soviet citizens into disloyal subjects even before they became soldiers.[68] Although there may be some truth to this statement, the state of our knowledge of Soviet soldiers' *weltanschauung* and their view of the recent past on the eve and in the first months of the war does not allow such sweeping generalizations.[69] Some Red Army soldiers, and more specifically Soviet Ukrainians, doubtless had grievances in the past; however, it is not at all clear if these grievances were construed in explicitly anti-Soviet terms before the population became acquainted with German propaganda, nor is it certain that grievances by themselves provided sufficient motivation for the decision to discontinue fighting. In the following section of the paper, I will concentrate on the actions of a number of Soviet soldiers, who for a variety of reasons decided not to continue fighting. I am interested not so much in the impact of desertion on the Red Army battle performance, but rather in

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[68] See Roger Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925-1941*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1996: 203-204. Also Karel Berkhoff, "Hitler's Clean Slate: Everyday Life in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, 1941-1944." PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1998: 22-23.

[69] For example K.Berkhoff elsewhere in his study presents evidence suggesting that the memory of the famine did not necessarily translate into disloyalty of the young Ukrainians to the Soviet state (Berkhoff, "Hitler's Clean Slate," 339).

what deserters and stragglers did once found themselves adrift from their respective units and what these actions tell us about the direction in which a section of the Soviet polity was moving at the time. The available data indicate that the disloyalty framework can work at best with significant qualifications. It is true that some soldiers, who crossed over to the German side, were kulak children, and may indeed have been little committed to defending the Soviet state. The most instructive in this respect is the case of the kulak son Ivan Avramenko, born in 1910. Shortly after he was mobilized into the army, Avramenko engineered a desertion conspiracy, involving six soldiers. They abandoned the truck, of which Avramenko was a driver, and rushed over the frontline into the German captivity.[70] The experience of the Soviet deserter Hryhorii Katiushenko from the village of Tiahynka, Beryslav District differed only in the final destination of his journey. Unlike the men above who would soon return to the familiar occupation of agricultural laborers in the native area, Katiushenko chose to become a HiWi truck driver and died in action at Rostov in August 1942.[71] The question, however, remains: did these men have anti-Soviet attitudes before the breakout of the war or did they develop them only after the German propaganda placed their previous experiences into a different perspective? And what about those deserters that can hardly be categorized as particularly disadvantaged by the Soviet state, like Ivan Kozlenko, a

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[70] DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.35, d.1, l.85; In January 1943 Ivan Avramenko joined the reserve police in his native Chulakivka. His fate resembles that of many adult men in the area. Immediately upon the return of the Red Army to Hola Prystan' District in November 1943, Avramenko, who somehow evaded evacuation to Germany, was mobilized. He died in action just a month later on December 16, 1943 and is buried in the village Dnipriany, Kakhovka District. See *Kniga Pamiati. Khersonskaya oblast*, Simferopol', 1995, v.3: 360.

[71] DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.30, l.65.

former kolkhoz bookkeeper, who gave himself up to the Germans in September 1941?[72] Likewise in the account of A.Naumov, nothing suggests that his decision to desert was motivated by hostility to the Soviet system. Above all, Naumov's actions were driven by fear, which he honestly acknowledges. On September 10, 1941 as Naumov's unit was retreating towards the village Rybalche in the Hola Prystan' District, the carburetor of Naumov's truck broke down and he had to stay behind to fix it, with an order to rejoin the unit as soon as possible. The damage, however, proved very serious. Not able to fix it promptly and fearing to fall into Germans' hands, Naumov abandoned the vehicle and took shelter in the house of certain Soloviev in Hola Prystan'. He soon left for the village Chulakivka and later for Bekhtery, where he was hiding from the Red Army units, expecting they would call him to justice for abandoning the truck. After German troops entered Bekhtery Naumov set back on the road for Chulakivka. He ended up in the village Nova Zburiyivka in the house of Halyna Semenova, whom he eventually married.[73] The analysis of the available sources suggests that the experience of A. Naumov was very common. Whereas a few soldiers would cross over to the German side, many more on separating themselves from their units would try very hard to avoid German captivity by exchanging their uniforms for some civilian clothing and heading home.[74] These survival strategies strikingly

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[72] DAKhO, f. r-1501, op.3, d.10, l.57.

[73] DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.35, d.1, l.64.

[74] Yakiv Sadovyi, born in 1915, after his unit got encircled in September 1941 abandoned his truck and all weapons and went home (DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.35, d.1, l.91). In January 1942 in the village Ushkalka, now Verkhniy Rohachyk District, the native police carried out a series of raids on the houses of the villagers. As a result they were able to confiscate quite a few sets of military uniforms that the peasants doubtless

resemble the actions of one formerly patriotic straggler, whom I have introduced earlier in the chapter, Georgii Tsedrik, who, as shown earlier, took great pains to join the Red Army in summer 1941. In October of the same year Tsedrik's unit was shredded to pieces in the village Andriyivka (Zaporizhzhia region). While a lot of his comrades died or were taken prisoner, the wounded Tsedrik avoided this fate. He clearly had several options available to him. The most obvious choice was to surrender to the Germans, as many Red Army soldiers would do in the first months of the war. He could also attempt to rejoin the Red Army units, the strategy pursued by quite a number of stragglers.[75] Characteristically enough, Tsedrik chose the third path. He stopped at some village, exchanged his uniform for peasant rags and went home to Kherson,

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acquired from Red Army deserters or stragglers (DAKhO, f.r-1633, op.1, d.1, ll.63-67). Interestingly enough the German leaflets called on the Soviet deserters to keep their military uniforms on, while it is quite possible that the soldiers were instructed by their officers and politruks to disguise themselves as civilians in case of being left behind from their units. See Buchbender, *Das toenende Erz*, 67.

[75] Some stragglers did attempt to rejoin the Red Army. In October 1941 Andrii Pavlovs'kyi, a Communist from the village Velyka Lepetykha and a partisan in the Reznichenko partisan detachment, active in the forest areas along the Dnieper, together with his brother-in-law Karpo Pylypenko, following the destruction of the partisan unit by the 444 security brigade, managed to break out of the encirclement. The situation confronted the two men with a choice. Karpo Pylypenko decided to return home in Verkhniy Rohachyk, where that very evening the native police detained him. Andrii Pavlovs'kyi was resolved to rejoin the Red Army. He succeeded in doing so and would die in action in Belgorod region in summer 1942. Andrii Pavlovs'kyi's son Mykola learned about these details from his father's letters that he got from the fellow Lepetykha resident named Mykhailo Astukevych in 1944, more than two years after his father's death. Astukevych, then being evacuated, appears to have run into the sergeant Andrii Pavlovskyi at a train station shortly before the latter's death. (Interview with Mykola Andriyovych Pavlovs'kyi, Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson Region, September 11, 2003).

where he arrived in early November.[76] The fact that at least some of these people were unmistakably Soviet patriots early in the war suggests that there were more important factors for some soldiers' decision to disengage themselves from the further struggle unrelated to alleged disloyalty to the Soviet government, including frightening battle experiences that caused an abrupt evaporation of patriotic enthusiasm, German propaganda accentuating the seemingly inevitable military defeat and the proximity to one's native area. The significance of the latter factor is frequently overlooked in historical literature, but the fact that the local soldiers, unlike Russians or Georgians for example, knew they would find shelter with relatives, must have made the temptation to quit fighting and escape to the security of home too great for many of them.[77]

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[76] Here is what Tsedrik wrote about his last battle: "The German parachutists cut us off from our forces, and the tanks completed the encirclement movement. Soon the airplanes started attacking us. An almost defenseless unit got trapped. The battalion commander Oksman shot himself, whilst the commissar Rosenburd jumped on his horse and abandoned the soldiers. I saw soldiers shooting at him as he was galloping away. The company commanders and politruks disappeared without the trace. There started chaos and panic. I attempted to lead soldiers in a breakthrough, but got hit by an explosive wave and lost consciousness. I opened my eyes three days later in a barn. All the doctors were gone and even nurses too. Many soldiers died from wounds, while others had worms swarming in their wounds. Andriyivka remained unoccupied by either side as yet. Some women brought us water and food and told us that on the other side of the village the Germans had organized a camp. On the same day I and two other soldiers left. Having exchanged my new uniform for peasant rags I walked towards Kherson. I arrived there on November 3, 1941" (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, l.12).

[77] Vsevolod Osten, who in 1941 fought in Zaporizhzhia region, just north of my area of study, provided a very vivid and, in my opinion, quite insightful perspective on desertion and the role civilians played in it. See his *Vstan' nad bol'yu svoei*. Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1989: 58-60. The uncle of the author's grandmother Ivan Maistrenko, in 1941 a junior political officer in the Red Army unit, came home in fall 1941. Being a Communist he had to hide in a specifically prepared hide-out in the nearby forest. The author's great-grandmother would secretly bring him food. He hid their until the last day of the German occupation (Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, August 13, 2003).

I have not brought up this evidence to argue that desertion or abandoning the battlefield was overwhelming, although it was doubtless quite high.[78] It is clear that the majority of Red Army soldiers continued to fight to the best of their ability. The significance of this group is not in their numbers, but in the fact that unlike many Red Army soldiers still fighting, these people were representative of civilians that found themselves on the occupied territory. Much like the rest of the population, they were formerly loyal or at least conforming Soviet citizens overwhelmed by the reality of war and concerned with their personal survival. A few of them sought a *modus vivendi* with the occupation forces by collaboration; others were completely disillusioned and for a while showed no propensity to identify with any fighting force.

While civilians, and to a lesser extent conscripted men in the field, had some room for maneuver and sometimes disposed of several choices, the awareness of the German war of destruction confronted Soviet functionaries in Kherson with but one alternative. The early morning of August 14 saw them running for their lives from the panic stricken city, virtually abandoning to their own devices all the civilians who were still

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[78] Throughout 1942 the Ukrainian *upravas* compiled lists of POWs working in the agricultural communities. Determining deserters and stragglers on these lists is quite easy, even if the distinctions are not explicitly stated. The POWs, whom the Germans released from the camps usually had POW documents, stating the date and site of their imprisonment, the number of the POW camp and the date of release. The papers were required for the newcomers to register in the upravas. Members of the second group as a rule had no such document. Based on several lists available, one must conclude that by 1942 in some villages of Kherson region more than 20% of locals officially classified as POWs, had actually never been to the camps. For example in the village Kostohryzovo, Tsiurupyns'k district out of 50 former POWs 17 are explicitly termed as "deserters" (DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.13, d.9, ll.38-40).

willing to evacuate.[79] In the process there occurred numerous cases of financial abuse, as heads of many enterprises picked up their employees' salaries before fleeing.[80] In the coming afternoon the destruction battalion, the last bastion of authority, left as well, inaugurating a brief, but extremely dynamic period of interregnum. However, unlike party and state organs, the destruction battalion would not leave quietly, conducting prior to its retreat to Tsiurupyns'k a series of diversions in pursuit of the official scorched earth policy.[81] Near the Pankratiev Bridge the trusted *obkom* workers set on fire the Tissin mill, leaving the remaining city dwellers without bread. How the newly emerging identity of civilians was ever more diverging from the Soviet ideal becomes obvious in the popular attempts to counter the implemented scorched-earth policy, clearly not in the interests of the incoming Germans, but for one's own sake. After one of the diversionary groups dumped grain from the giant elevator into the Dnieper, people living in the *Military Vorstadt*[82] and the adjacent streets would approach the site

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[79] Boris Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona, 1941-1944*, unpublished manuscript in the Kherson regional library, 1993: 1; That there were quite a few such people leaves no doubt. According to Muza Kovaleva, on August 19 as the Germans were entering Kherson her mother was in despair because of the family's failure to leave the city. "But what could we do?" remarked Muza, "they promised to take us on board the motor-boat" (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 32, l.104).

[80] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, ll.11-12; Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 1.

[81] The best known order to this effect was the directive of the Communist Party and the Council of People's Commissars as of June 29, 1941. See John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad.* New York: Harper and Row, 1975:138.

[82] Historical part of Kherson, known as *Voenka* in local vernacular.

in boats and scoop the swollen grain from the water. Elsewhere, civilians rushed inside the burning premises, attempting to rescue the grain from burning completely.[83]

The departure of Soviet authorities and the later arrival of the Germans did not generate in Kherson or for that matter elsewhere in the region any seemingly spontaneous anti-Jewish pogroms, the development so characteristic of Eastern Poland, Galicia and the Baltic countries, where well-organized Nationalist groups were active collaborating with the Germans.[84] If anything bothered the anxious Khersonians at this time, it was their personal survival. In the city divested of any authority there rapidly spread panic and fear of impending famine.[85]

The panicky people rushed to the food stores, bakeries. They would break windows and doors, leaving a big mess. They would cart and wheelbarrow away sacks with flour

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[83] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 1. Similar episodes happened elsewhere in the region. In Hola Prystan' peasants also rescued some grain from destruction. In December 1941 native police on behalf of German authorities confiscated this grain. See DAKhO, f.r-1501, op.3, d.3, ll.1-32.

[84] The only incident of anti-Jewish violence that I have found, occurred in Bereznehovata district in Mykolayiv region, where a pack of hooligans tied the rabbi to the tail of a horse and dragged him through the streets. Outrageous as it was, this incident can hardly merit the definition of a pogrom. (Shaikin, Ziabko, "Natsistskii genotsid,"159). For the discussion of pogroms in summer 1941, see Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland.* Penguin Books, 2000; Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919-1945.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002: 100-104; Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*. Muenchen: R.Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996 : 54-67; Knut Stang, "Hilfspolizisten und Soldaten: Das 2./12 litauische Schutzmannschaftsbataillion in Kaunas und Weißrußland" in R.-D. Mueller und H.-E. Volkmann (hrgs), *Wehrmacht: Mythos und Realität* . Muenchen: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999: 858-878; Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess (eds), *"The Good Old Days": The Holocaust As Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, New York: Free Press, 1991: 23-58.

[85] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 1; Interview with Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), Kherson, September 9, 2003.

that did not quite burn to ashes. They looted conservations, butter, sugar, and surrogates from the conservation factory. They "cleansed" the macaroni factory and the Voikov candy factory, city kitchens and confectioneries, other food places.[86]

So described this looting psychosis Khersonian Boris Vadon, honestly confessing that he regretted being unable to participate in the operation "Food", because the city military board had hospitalized him for hernia surgery a few days earlier.[87]

The panic certainly did not escape the diversionists themselves, some of whom did not manage to evacuate their families. Nikolai Gubenko, a member of the destruction battalion and a worker at the Stalin storage factory in Kherson, was ordered to destroy the remaining produce so that it would not fall into the enemy's hands. Gubenko fulfilled the order only partially, having previously ensured that his family had enough food.[88] As it turned out, city residents did not content themselves with looting available foodstuffs. For some Khersonians alcohol appears to have been a most coveted commodity. According to Boris Vadon:

A crowd of Bacchus worshippers made it to the wine factory, which was located in the former governor's mansion (the building was destroyed during the war). Breaking

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[86] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 2; The looting is also referred to in the report about the activities of the Danube flotilla, which mentions it disapprovingly and places the major blame on the NKVD and Party functionaries who fled and allowed for a "reign of anarchy" to descend upon the city. In *Trybuna* #34, August 9-15, 1991; also by Konstantin Balakirev, a military commandant of Kherson between August 15 and August 19, 1941. See the same issue of *Trybuna*.

[87] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 2.

[88] According to Gubenko's daughter, Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), during the interregnum they managed to store so much sugar and conservations of all sorts that Zamiralova's mother did not have to work during the occupation. Instead she brewed moonshine, which she was able to exchange for food, naturally using the hoarded sugar in the process. (Interview with Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), Kherson, September 9, 2003).

the locks, the mob rushed into the cellar. There, using axes and iron rod they demolished monstrous wine barrels. The wine was pouring onto the floor, reaching half a meter level. Drunken, excited alcoholics did not pay any attention to this, but continued to fill buckets, jars and bottles. The wine was now reaching the belt. Suddenly a fight broke out between the looters. As a result one of the "drunken heroes" drowned right in the cellar. I learned about it from a witness of the scuffle.[89]

The interregnum ended next day, as navy officer Konstantin Balakirev arrived in the city from Mykolayiv at the head of a marine task force with an order to ensure the orderly transfer to the left bank of the Dnieper of armaments and equipment abandoned in Kherson by Red Army units and to organize the defense of the city.[90] The report of the Danube flotilla approvingly mentions the activities of Balakirev in the city of Kherson during his 4-day tenure as a military commandant. According to this document Balakirev brought order back into the city by shooting some twenty "marauders".[91] Also, the local Party and Soviet functionaries, who fled the day before, were "discovered" in Tsiurupyns'k and brought back to Kherson in convoy to perform their duties.[92]

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[89] Vadon *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 2.

[90] "Ya Balakirev Konstantin Mikhailovich..." in *Trybuna* #34, August 9-15, 1991.

[91] There is every reason to believe that "marauders" from the Danube flotilla report are actually simple Khersonians shot in the process of looting and that the executions most probably did not involve a previous trial. D. Belyi, who conducted a series of interviews, in his essay mentioned that after the marines dumped on the ground the sunflower oil from tanks at the railway station, some locals attempted to scoop oil from the ground, but the marines opened fire on them. See Dementiy Belyi "Khersonskaya starina," *Nedvizhimost' goroda* (March 15-31, 1997): 2.

[92] *Trybuna* #34, August 9-15, 1991; A. Gusakov, a fighter in the destruction battalion, indirectly corroborates the report, saying that the destruction battalion returned to the city next day, but does not have anything to say about the role of Balakirev's marines in the process. DAKhO f. r-3562, op.2, d. 47, l.4.

Balakirev was apparently less successful organizing the defense of the city than he was restoring the order and implementing the scorched earth policy there, partly because of the scarcity of manpower available to him. As Balakirev himself acknowledged, all his efforts to boost his task force with retreating Soviet soldiers by organizing them into combat formations fell flat, as the demoralized and exhausted Red Army soldiers would not remain in the defensive positions for long, and joined the general stream moving eastwards.[93] Curiously enough even in this seemingly hopeless situation some Khersonians did not lose hope that the Germans would be prevented from entering Kherson. The young Vladimir Stepanov remembered:

> Before the Germans entered the city all inhabitants of our apartment building were down in the cellar, day and night. When we heard the artillery barrage from the right bank of the river and the roar of our planes, everybody would get scared, but I told my friend Boria Sukhorukov, that I was not afraid and that the noise of battle meant that the Germans would not get through. But the Germans came... I did not want to leave the cellar. I wanted ours to shoot more...[94]

Following a day of limited engagements with the German advance guard formations in the north-western outskirts of the city, Balakirev's marine company and units of people's militia retreated to the left bank of the Dnieper. The last to leave were the fighters of the destruction battalion, who hurried to destroy what had not yet been destroyed.[95] According to the residents of Kherson suburbs, on the afternoon of August

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[93] *Trybuna* #34, August 9-15, 1991.

[94] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 28, l.13.

[95] A. Gusakov wrote after the war: "On the order of the city Committee of the Communist Party and the secretary for the industry Ye. Hayovyi, I together with a group of fighters, was ordered to disassemble the remaining equipment /of the Petrovskii plant/ and destroy it. Such equipment was not much. Only in one section of the plant we found a number of fully prepared electrical engines ready for the dispatch. We did the job all right. As far as remaining hand grenades were concerned, we loaded

19, 1941 the first Germans appeared on the northern side of the city, near the railway station. They climbed trees, observed the area through binoculars and ascertained there were no Red Army troops in the city. Then they got back on their motorcycles, turned around and moved towards Chornobayivka. In a few hours the Wehrmacht units occupied the city virtually unhindered.[96]

Perhaps the most interesting question of the summer 1941 is the initial encounters between the local population and the incoming German troops. The research I have so far conducted indicates clearly that in this part of the country, with the exception of a few predominantly *Volksdeutsche* villages, the Germans did not receive the hearty welcome accorded to them in the Baltics, and in the formerly Polish territories of Western Ukraine and Byelorussia. A few isolated instances aside, the bulk of the native population met the Wehrmacht in a most restrained manner.[97] In fact, where a few cases of welcome indeed occurred, for their unsuspecting initiators they were fraught with dangers, as German soldiers were prone to act violently. In Beryslav, a site of bitter 3- day fighting, in which the Germans suffered comparatively high casualties, one local woman was seen running towards the German soldiers and screaming "Our dear Liberators!" The woman was carrying bread and salt to welcome the "liberators."For some reason, possibly fear of a partisan attack, the troops wanted to

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them onto the platform and in order to prevent them from falling into the enemy's hands we dumped them into the Dnieper. On August 19, around 3-4p.m we once again crossed the river into Tsirupyns'k and in a few hours we learned that the Germans had occupied Kherson" (DAKhO, f. r-3562, op.2, d. 47, l.4).

[96] Vadon, *Okkupatsia Khersona*, 1.

[97] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona,* 1; Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, August 13, 2003.

shoot her, but changed their minds when they saw bread. So they took it away from the woman and moved along.[98] Civilians, who happened to get in the way of German soldiers, were also putting themselves at risk. In Kherson, on August 19, a German soldier was seen walking down the street with a native boy by his side. The soldier was saying something, which the boy of course did not understand. The next moment the German got angry and began yelling. To the youngster's rescue came a woman who understood German. She asked the soldier what was the matter. It turned out the German was lost and wanted to know how to get to some place.[99] Some civilians were less lucky. In Kakhovka, upon the arrival of German troops on September 1, Nadiya Yakovenko was walking down the street with a baby in her arms, when one of the German soldiers shot at her, instantly killing both the woman and her child.[100]

Most of the locals, however, preferred to avoid these early encounters. They would withdraw to their cellars and houses and shut the windows.[101] Some people acknowledged they were afraid of the incoming Germans. For several days they would not venture outside.[102] These fears, reflecting Soviet propaganda stories and rumors of

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[98] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.70.

[99] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.7-8.

[100] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d.118, l.52.

[101] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.25, l.8; DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 1, l.53; DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.24-25; DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 28, l.13. Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova) told me that her mother brought all the kids inside, when the Germans were spotted on the outskirts of the village. They were all lying in bed when two German soldiers stepped inside the house. Seeing people in bed, the Germans uttered the word "krank!" (sick) and quickly walked away. (Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, August 13, 2003).

[102] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.25, l.8.

German atrocities disseminated by refugees from Western regions, doubtless influenced local attitudes. Important as the factor of fear was, one should not discount the impact of longer-term factors, namely the largely Soviet identity of Khersonians that would not allow the welcome of the enemy. The identification with the Soviet state, however, suffered a tremendous blow after the Soviet withdrawal from the area, and many civilians were forced to come to grips with the reality of a German occupation. Thus in some sections of the population one notes a certain curiosity inseparable from fear, the attitude particularly characteristic of children. A young Khersoner O. Borodavkin wrote in 1944: "As the Germans were entering the city, we were looking through the peepholes in the windows with curiosity," while some of his neighbors even came outside to take a better look at the newcomers.[103] This comment notwithstanding, the interaction between the Germans and the locals in the first days of the occupation was very limited, partly because of the above-mentioned restraint of the locals, but also because of the wariness or arrogance of the Germans. In the village Zelene (now in Verkhniy Rohachyk district), for example, in the spirit of traditional hospitality the peasants invited German officers, who came to observe a funeral, to partake in the ritual by drinking some vodka, but the Germans refused.[104] It seems that

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[103] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.26, ll.22.

[104]That was the funeral of my grandmother's grandfather Myna Maistrenko who died in action on the same day the Germans arrived in the village. Earlier that day a Red Army reconnaissance unit came to Zelene and asked the locals to show them the road to one of the neighboring villages. The 70-year-old Myna Maistrenko agreed to take them there. On the road the unit ran into a group of German scouts. In a brief skirmish, the old man and one of the Soviet soldiers got killed, while the rest delivered the body to the relatives in Zelene (Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, August 13, 2003).

aside from putting locals to labor assignment of all sorts, such as extinguishing fires, a legacy of Communist diversions or clearing debris from the streets, the requisitions of food, more specifically poultry, for which the Wehrmacht soldiers became notorious as the war dragged on, formed the major domain of interaction between the Germans and the indigenous population in this period. A. Golubova remembers

> Next day after the Germans captured the city, two German soldiers entered our house. They were wearing helmets, and had rifles and revolvers. I got scared. I thought they would kill us. Over my bed a small picture of Lenin was hanging. On seeing the portrait, one of the Germans burst into laughter, but at that moment he got distracted by the noise our hens were making in the yard. "Oh, *Gut*!" He screamed. Another German had already caught the hen. After that they left.[105]

These food raids could become violent, if the locals, particularly women dared to resist, or if the requisitions were taking place in the area of high intensity combat, such as the above-mentioned town of Beryslav. There a group of German soldiers beat one woman, before taking away her pig and hens.[106] However, because not every local speaks about the requisitions in 1941, and because those who do mention these earlier excesses in the context of later policies, one should be careful not to overestimate their extent and significance for the relations between locals and Germans in August-September 1941.[107] In this respect, other aspects of the German occupation policy would prove far more significant, and will be duly discussed in subsequent chapters.

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[105] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.25, l.15.

[106] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.49.

[107] Less common forms of cultural collisions than food requisitions and labor assignments in the first days of occupation were expelling locals from their houses and removing civilians from combat areas, a striking precursor of the policy of the German military authorities in 1943-1944 (DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.49; DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.128). Also, at least, in one case in the first days of the occupation the

Summing up, in the first chapter, I attempted to show that as the Kherson area was increasingly dragged into the orbit of the war as a result of Soviet military setbacks, the patriotic enthusiasm so characteristic of June-July began to wane, both among the civilians and among the Red Army soldiers deployed in the area. The question of personal survival was decidedly taking priority over the abstract notion of defending the Soviet motherland, which some sections of the population, doubtless under the impact of the German propaganda, even began to identify as the realm of Judeo-Communists. How to ensure this personal survival was up to the individual. Some Kherson Jews, Communists and non-Communist Soviet loyalists sought salvation, with different degrees of success, in evacuation or escape from the area, while others assumed, sometimes mistakenly, they would be safer remaining where they were. Such options were not readily available to locals already in the army. Some soldiers, unwilling to continue fighting for the Soviet cause would desert and cross over to the German side, but many more would frequently return home, to their families. By the time of the German arrival in the area, the popular attitudes in Kherson region were as diverse as possible. Many *Volksdeutsche* and a small fraction of the indigenous population would welcome the Germans as "liberators" and would later distinguish themselves by cooperating with the occupation authorities. A larger section of the people remained Soviet loyalists, albeit disorganized and demoralized by the Red Army defeats. The events before the arrival of the Wehrmacht units and the first encounters with the

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German military authorities ordered the Ukrainian population to leave the village within 24 hours, making their houses available for the *Volksdeutsche* settlers. This happened in the village Kostyrka, Beryslav District (DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.36).

Germans, however, were symptomatic that yet another social group was in the making in Kherson region. First and foremost, the social formation that the Soviet withdrawal from the area helped to forge was characterized by atomization, a crisis of identity, profound ideological void and apprehension of newcomers' intentions, at times combined with wary optimism that the German propaganda did its best to foster. The reality of the Soviet defeat and German propaganda steered these people away from the Soviet vision, but did not persuade them to fully embrace the collaborationist stance. These individuals made up the most numerous, the most heterogeneous and the least known group. Their political aspirations were never clearly articulated in fall 1941, nor do their postwar reminiscences shed more light on the question, not least because of these people's later re-embrace of Soviet identity with its characteristic conception of history that ineluctably taints their portrayal of war years.[108] The presence and reality of the above-mentioned trends in local society would become even more manifest, as German occupation policies unfolded. The following chapters will provide an analysis of the development of the local polity in the years 1941-1943. Few events in this period were more instrumental in determining the path the evolution of this highly fragmented society would take than was the German destruction of the Communists, Jews and Soviet POWs, which I will analyze in Chapter 2.

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[108] A good specimen of this group is Yakov Tkhorovskii. In summer 1941 he did not evacuate from the area; instead after the arrival of the Germans he started a business of his own. Tkhorovskii's retail trade blossomed when the Red Army turned the tables and forced the *Wehrmacht* on the retreat. In this situation Tkhorovskii accepted the proposal of the Communist underground to support the organization financially. In fact, he became a Soviet patriot in the process. See chapter 3. Tkhorovskii's unpublished memoir is at DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.32-45.

'One day I came out of the house to sit on the bench and get warm against the sun. There other boys were sitting. Soon there came two German officers. One yelled at us "Ab, Russ!", although there was plenty of space on the bench. I learned it meant, "Get out, Russian!" The storm of hate began to rise inside of me.'
Vladimir Stepanov.[109]

## Chapter 2

### Bystanders into Victims: German Occupation, War of Extermination and Radicalization of the Kherson Body Social, August 1941- January 1942

The second chapter of the thesis, dealing with an early period of the German rule, attempts to uncover Kherson's lived experiences of the foreign occupation that precipitated the spread of unmistakeably anti-German sentiments as early as winter 1941-1942. The prism through which I propose to examine the evolution of the popular perceptions of the German occupation are highly complex local experiences of the German extermination policies. These, having engulfed Kherson Jews and Communist resisters, gradually, through the deliberate withdrawal of food, spread their influence onto the Soviet prisoners of war and even onto a large section of the city population, who, pushed to the brink of starvation, owed their survival almost exclusively to the emergence of the black market and to a smaller extent to the migrations into the countryside.

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[109] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 28, l.13.

What strikes many historians of the period is an extraordinary wealth of local reactions to the occupation policies, ranging from enthusiastic collaboration with the Germans to armed resistance, with the majority of Khersonians occupying the "gray zone" in between the two extremes. It is this silent majority that forms the focus of attention of this article. Although in the short term the German extermination project did not target the bulk of non-Jewish Khersonians, the impact of the popular knowledge of the Holocaust and merciless annihilation of Soviet partisans on the evolution of the local attitudes is not to be easily dismissed. Above all else, I will argue, early exposure to the unmitigated violence created an atmosphere of all-pervasive fear in society and unwittingly provided the population with a framework to interpret further events. Hence, when the more-inclusive German policy of food management, resulting in the mass death in the POW camps and a near starvation in the city came to the forefront, the Kherson population began to perceive the reality as another step in the German master plan to exterminate the bulk of the local residents. Needless to say POWs stationed in the city arrived at this conclusion even earlier. Significantly, both Kherson civilians and the inmates of POW camps did not remain powerless pawns in German hands, the impression one might derive from some works on the Second World War in Ukraine. Although their choices were significantly circumscribed by the German policies, the non-Germans nonetheless remained important agents, whose actions or lack of such determined the specifics of local wartime experience and were frequently decisive for the death of some and survival of other people.

On 20 August 1941, the day after the Germans entered the city of Kherson, all local men below 55 years of age were ordered to report to the city grain storehouses in the Military Vorstadt with their passports ready for the check-out and registration.[110] There the members of the *Einsatzkommando 11a* who arrived in the city in the footsteps of the army units, assisted by a number of cooperative locals, identified many Jews and Communists and separated them from the rest of the civilians. Some 410 Jews (400 men and 10 women) were promptly shot in retaliation for the diversions that the Kherson destruction battalion had administered prior to the retreat (See Chapter 1).[111] According to the *Einsatzgruppe* report, the Germans failed to arrest any Communist functionaries. The highest-ranking Communist they apprehended was a certain Kaminskii, apparently a ChK official during the Civil war, who, the German report claimed, participated in the execution of Tsarist officers in 1919. Another "big fish" the *Einsatzgruppe* discovered was the head of the NKVD prison workshop.[112]

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[110] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.14; DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.50; Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona,* 3.

[111] Peter Klein, (hrsg) *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42: Die Taetigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD.* Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1997:232. According to this source, the executions must have taken place no earlier than September 10 and no later than the beginning of October (Ibidem, 243). The testimonies of Khersonians, however, unambiguously indicate that the "grain storehouse" action took place on August 20. It is then possible that the people remained in custody for some time.

[112] Klein, (hrsg) *Die Eisatzgruppen*, 232; Volodymyr Kosyk, *Ukraina v Druhii Svitovii Viyni u dokumentakh*. Lviv: Vyddavnytstvo Lvivs'koho Universytetu, 1999, v.2: 28; The reference to the murdered Tsarist officers is interesting. It implicitly states that some of the prompts came from the former White guard officers, who are known to have cooperated with the Wehrmacht in the area. The former member of the Kherson

It appears that with the exception of the above-mentioned Jews and a few indigenous Communists of higher stature, the remaining civilians, including Communist rank-and-file, were released after a meticulous registration.[113] The latter development suggests that the occupation authorities initially made a conscious effort to exclude from the category of ideological enemies all the locals provided these were not Jews and did not engage in acts of resistance. Naturally the primary beneficiaries of the German "liberation rhetoric" were Ukrainians.[114] However, some Jews also owed their temporary survival to the initial German efforts to re-order the Kherson popular landscape in terms of alleged "friends" and "sworn enemies". Some 150 Jewesses married to local Ukrainians remained alive after the Germans implemented the "final solution" of the Jewish question in Kherson in the second half of September.[115] This step, like the initial policy of the German military to release from captivity rank and file

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destruction batallion M.P.Morozenko mentioned after the war that in August 1941 the units of people's militia captured two enemy parachutists in the village Dariyivka just outside Kherson. According to Morozenko one of them was Pavel Pozhydaev, a former officer of the Vrangel Army , a native of Kherson. Both saboteurs were passed on to the NKVD and apparently shot (*Khersonskaya oblast v gody Velikoi otechestvennoi voiny, 1941-1945.* Simferopol', 1975: 76-77.

[113] This follows from the testimony of Kherson GK Behrens who in January 1942 reported to GenK Oppermann about the recent arrest of all former "Communist functionaries" and the public hanging of 6 of them in retaliation for the appearance of anti-Fascist leaflets in the city (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.11).

[114] The idea that the Germans liberated Ukrainians from the tyranny of "Judeo-Communists" was a leitmotif of the Ukrainian language press of the occupation period. Every issue of the Kherson newspaper *Holos Dnipra* contained vitriolic indictments of "Judeo-Communists", the 'sworn enemies' of the Ukrainian people.

[115] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.95, l.2; For a general overview of the German treatment of Jews in mixed marriages, see Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992: 131-138.

soldiers of Ukrainian nationality, was primarily motivated by the Germans' desire to create a positive impact on the indigenous population and to support the Germans' portrayal of the war as a crusade against the "Judeo-Communists," not the Ukrainian population as a whole.[116] This selective deployment of terror and propaganda created an initial impression that the Germans' war of extermination was limited to the psychological "other," the Jew or the Communist partisan.[117]

The ideologically driven violence continued unabated after the German security units pacified the area by shooting "saboteurs." Shortly after their arrival in Kherson the German military confined the Jews to the ghetto located in a remote section of the city[118] and forced them to wear a yellow Star of David, which completed the physical and psychological isolation of the Jews.[119]

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[116] The Commander of the Army Group South Rear Area Gen. Roques instructed his subordinates on August 16, 1941: "We must convey the impression that we are just. Whenever the perpetrator of an act of sabotage cannot be found, Ukrainians are not to be blamed. In such cases reprisals are therefore to be carried out only against Jews and Russians." Cited in Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. New York, Harper and Row, 1961:198.

[117] The fact that many locals believed early on that the Germans fought against the "Judeo-Communists" should not be taken to mean that all of them sympathized with the extermination policies. In fact, German anti-Semitic propaganda appears to have elicited counter-discourses. Georgii Tsedrik remembered after the war what he saw in Kherson in December 1941: "Near the Voikov factory there hung a poster, portraying a caricature of an old Jew with sidelocks, wearing a skullcap and smiling in a most vile manner. Below it smarted an inscription in the Ukrainian language "The Kike is your eternal enemy—Kill him!" Yet underneath the poster a child's hand scribed on the wall "Good people, Save the Judah!" (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, l.15).

[118] The ghetto was located around the cross-section of Frunze and Rabochaya Streets. See A. Karpova "Kherson v roky okkupatsiyi," *Pole*, 24 March, 2000.

[119] DAKhO, f.r-1479, op.1, d. 11, l.26; Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 1.

The role of non-Germans in the Holocaust has been a bone of contention among historians for a number of years. In Kherson in the first months of the occupation the role of Ukrainians (and Russians) in the German war of extermination varied. As the first chapter demonstrated, the disintegration of Communist authority after the Red Army's retreat from the area forced many people to come to terms with the German occupation. A minority collaborated with the Germans and vigorously implemented the harshest occupation policies, including the destruction of Jews and Communists, the main bearers of the Communist ideology, according to the Nazis.[120] The numerical insignificance of this group should not overshadow the importance of these people for the successful implementation of German genocidal policies, as a few studies have recently demonstrated.[121] On the other hand, some former Soviet subjects, while not directly participating in the destruction and violence against the now marginalized Jews and Communists, contributed by denouncing members of the targeted groups, a development that forms a striking continuum with the Soviet practices of denunciation in 1930s and in post-war years.[122] It is clear that in Kherson, where the Jews were fairly

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[120] The Soviet Commission for the investigation of Fascist crimes in the Kherson region was able to identify some 130 perpetrators of war crimes, almost half of which were Germans. Whereas in the case of Germans, the figures are certainly incomplete, one can presume the numbers are fairly accurate for the native perpetrators, as the civilians who provided testimony about the native collaborators knew well enough which of them participated in executions (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op. 1, d.118, l.41).

[121] Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Native Police in Byelorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Martin Dean, "The German Gendermerie, the Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft and the "Second Wave" of Jewish Killings in Occupied Ukraine: German Policing at the Local Level in the Zhitomir Region, 1941-1944," *German History* (vol.14, 1996, #2): 168-192.

[122] See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation from 1930s," *Journal of Modern History*(vol.68, #4 Practices of Denunciation in Modern

well assimilated and did not differ substantially in their appearance, clothing and sometimes even in names from the rest of the population, the Germans could identify them only through cooperation with the native police and to some extent with an activist segment of the local population, whose denunciations sealed the fates of a large number of Kherson Jews who had somehow failed to register with the authorities in the first couple of days.[123] It is very tempting to see anti-Semitism as a driving force behind denunciations of the Jews; but, as noted, because denunciations had for a long time been the *modus operandi* between the Soviet state and the population and particularly because non-Jews likewise were not immune from their impact, one should think we deal here with a very complex social phenomenon in need of further clarification.[124] It appears that for some voluntary informers anti-Semitism played only a peripheral role, if any. The Khersonian resident Alla Dedova related after the war about the fate of a young patriotic Jew named Yakov Sverdlov, who shortly after the German arrival in the city made signals with an electric lantern to Soviet planes from the roof of his house.

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European History, 1789-1989, Dec., 1996): 816-866; For the denunciations in the post war USSR see Vladimir Kozlov, "Denunciation and Its Functions in Soviet Governance: A Study of Denunciations and Their Bureaucratic Handling from Soviet Police Archives, 1944-1953," *Journal of Modern History* (vol.68, #4 Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989, Dec., 1996): 867-898.

[123] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 1.

[124] Some people were habitual denouncers, who regularly reported to the Germans about the slightest transgressions of the regulations. For example, in the village of Chulakovka, Hola Prystan' District, L. Shtrygel' wrote at least four denunciations to the police (DAKhO, f.r-1501, op.3, d.10, ll. 72, 73, 75, 110). Another habitual denouncer, the former Tsarist officer named Zlachevskii paid dearly for falsely accusing some Ukrainian and Volksdeutsche functionaries of the auxiliary administration. Zlachevskii apparently landed in the concentration camp for slander (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.2, d.2, ll.14-22).

According to the same source, the young man's activities terrified his neighbors, who feared they would all get executed, should the Germans apprehend the signaler. Someone eventually informed on Sverdlov.[125]

In similar manner, denunciations coming from the local population easily thwarted the initial efforts of sympathetic Khersonians to save Jews, while the punishments meted out to the would-be rescuers sent the rest of the population a clear signal that such initiatives would not be tolerated. The already mentioned Boris Vadon attempted to help his 18 year-old Jewish neighbor Milia Cherkaskaya by giving testimony to the police that she was Russian. Unfortunately for the hapless girl and for Vadon himself, some neighbors promptly exposed his lie. Vadon was taken to the police where they gave him twenty whiplashes.[126] Sara Yudkevich's Russian husband met the same fate, as he attempted to procure from the police a Ukrainian passport for his Jewish wife.[127] In a small city like Kherson,[128] where many residents knew each other personally, the

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[125] Sverdlov's mother was hiding inside her neighbors' stove, but eventually succumbed to somebody's denunciation and met the fate of her son (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d. 26, l.147). It is possible Yakov Sverdlov was the very signaler, mentioned in the Einsatzgruppe report. See Klein (hrsg) *Die Einsatzgruppen,*233; Kosyk, *Ukraina*,29.

[126] Although Vadon doubtlessly knew which of his neighbor denounced him and Milia Cherkasskaya to the Gendermerie, he never mentioned their names in his memoir (Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona,* 3).

[127] Zubris, "Ne zaroslo travoyu zabuttia," *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, 21 September, 1995.

[128] According to the Soviet census of 1939 the population of the city was 97, 200 people. (*Istoriya mist is sil URSR. Khersons'ka oblast,* Kyiv, 1972: 46). The Soviet mobilization and evacuation combined with the German destructive policies to considerably reduce the number of city residents. The German-led census of April 18, 1942 registered the population as 61,126 people (*Holos Dnipra*, June 28, 1942). This German estimate is clearly too low, as it does not take into consideration quite a number of people who never registered with the German authorities to avoid labor obligation.

word of these people's experience spread rapidly and discouraged city-dwellers from helping the Jews.[129] By that time violence against Jews had already become a permanent characteristic of everyday life in Kherson. German soldiers stationed in the city and native collaborators habitually enjoyed themselves by putting Jews through all sorts of humiliating experiences. The Jews had to clean toilets, move heavy loads, were harnessed into carts instead of horses, and pulled the trucks with switched off engines.[130] Most significantly these outrages took place in the open, and were not infrequently accompanied by threats and bullying of the gentile bystanders. Janina Sadlij described at some length one such incident in September 1941, shortly before the liquidation of the Kherson ghetto:

> One day the Germans came to the hospital to check the sick. There were a lot of these and among them many Jews. Tamara Shkurina and I placed several Red Army soldiers into the infection chamber. The Germans would not venture there. Suddenly a group of Germans burst into the surgery room, accompanied by Val'ka-the- German and Grishka-the-Gypsy, the most notorious of native policemen. —"Who is hiding Yids here, big and small?"-- They yelled. Doctors Khasin and Kogan were bandaging a boy. Val'ka-the-German ran up to Khasin: "Did you Old Kike let your tongue loose about the shootings?!" He then knocked the old man down with a stick, --"take care of him Nikolaichuk!" and Nikolaichuk put a bayonet into Khasin's buttocks. Blood began to ooze from the wound. The policemen started laughing: "Now the Yid will have two holes!"-- While the old man was slowly bleeding to death.[131]

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[129] Janina Sadlij, for example, knew about B.Vadon's misfortune. She also mentioned another failure to rescue a Jew. Sadlij's friend fell in love with a Jewish man whom she was hiding at the hospital. The girl was careless enough to share her happiness with another friend of hers, who shortly denounced the Jew to the police. See Zubris, "Ne zaroslo Travoyu zabuttia," *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, 21 September, 1995.

[130] DAKhO, f.r-1479, op.1, d. 11, l.26; In the town Kakhovka the members of the Einsatzgruppe ordered a number of Jewish girls to clean the premises of the former district Komsomol building. At night the girls reportedly got raped by the soldiers and were subsequently murdered (Boris Nepomniashchiy, *Chernaya kniga Khersonshchiny*, Kherson, 1999: 29).

[131] Zubris, "Ne zaroslo travoyu zabuttia," *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, 21 September, 1995.

Frightening experiences of this kind had the effect of gradually relegating a large section of the formerly Soviet polity to the status of bystanders in the war of destruction, not infrequently sympathetic but seldom willing to risk their own lives to rescue persecuted Jews. This point is illustrated by the following episode of Kherson's wartime history. Sometime in September 1941 the Germans brought to the city a large number of Soviet POWs and dumped them into the yard of the building opposite school #28, having provided no medical assistance. The Germans, however, allowed civilians to take care of the prisoners with the exception of a few Jewish soldiers, who were segregated from the rest of POWs in a hut in the remote corner of the yard. The locals faced a death sentence for entering the premises.[132] The former Komsomol Muza Kovaleva was the only person among a group of local women helping the POWs, who dared to disobey the order. She recalls this episode:

> The people without water, food, and medical aid were crying for help. It was terrifying to hear their laments. Having chosen the moment when Franz, a German guard, left the yard, I rushed to the barn with bandages, anti-septical manganese solution and food, while Zoya (her sister) stood guard at the gates. Other women yelled "Crazy! They are going to kill you!" On opening the door I was stunned by what I saw. I saw people crawling, suffering from thirst and infected wounds. One of them, holding his legs was crying: "Why? Why is it my fault that I am a Jew?! I am a teacher I want to live!" I was begging him to be quiet. Should Franz hear him, I would be in big trouble. I was telling him that, but myself was drowning in tears. They were kissing my hands; let the conscience before the dead be my witness. It was like this. The Germans shot them later on."[133]

The local women's emphasis on the German reprisals ("Crazy! They are going to kill you!") rather than on Jewishness of the victims, suggests that the passivity of the

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[132] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 32, l.106.

[133] Ibidem, l.106.

population was not always motivated by anti-Semitism and popular support for the German genocidal policies.[134] In Kherson there certainly were many people who sympathized with the Jews, but fear of German reprisals kept them from getting involved in the Jewish plight.[135] Even the young Janina Sadlij, who is known to have

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[134] Amir Weiner recently framed local reactions to the Holocaust in the Vinnytsia region in the following terms: "Like most Europeans, including the Germans themselves, locals wanted to see the Jews diminished, isolated, even removed, but in a sterile way that would not further unnerve an already ravaged society. In other words, it was the form rather than the intent of the anti-Jewish measures that disturbed the locals" (Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 277). This judgment is clearly too harsh. While there certainly were anti-Semites and people who sympathized with the German destruction of the Jews, A. Weiner would do well, if he mentioned the existence within the wartime Soviet Ukrainian society of sizable trends quietly opposing anti-Semitism of Germans and some fellow Ukrainians.

[135] Interestingly enough in 1942 (the more precise date could not be established), the Germans authorized the release from the prison of a number of Jewish children, on the condition of their further conversion to Christianity and adoption by the non-Jews (The parents of these children were exterminated). Now that the fear of punishment for helping Jews, was not hanging over them, a number of Khersonians immediately went to the prison. Among them was Praskovia Savchenko. When she arrived and declared her intention to adopt a Jewish child, the prison official pointed at an elderly woman with a 4-year-old girl. That woman was ordered to give the child to Savchenko. As Savchenko learned later, the Germans shot the girl's mother Sima Rotzman, and her two brothers. They also shot the grandmother from whom Savchenko took the child. The girl herself, however, survived the occupation, although till 1965 she knew nothing about her Jewish parents (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 18). Valentina Zamiralova's mother Elena Gubenko was another local woman who went to the prison at the time.There she met her Jewish friend with whom they worked together at the Petrovskii plant before the war. The Jewish woman told Gubenko that they would be soon shot and begged her to save her two daughters, which Gubenko did. Only one of them, however, survived the occupation (Interview with Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), Kherson, September 13, 2003). Baptism clearly implied that the rescue effort was more of a collective endeavor compared to the efforts of individuals hiding run-away Jews. According to one source, which unfortunately I was not able to double-check for accuracy, instrumental in the rescue efforts of this sort were a Ukrainian orthodox priest Hashkevych and the head of the Ukrainian civil administration in Kherson Kalayda, an old activist of the Ukrainian National Republic, who issued the Jews documents, confirming their conversion to Christianity (I came by this piece of information from the DAKhO archivist Zoria Solomonovna Orlova).

helped Jews initially, eventually succumbed to the general "paralysis" of will. On September 23, on the very eve of the liquidation of the Kherson ghetto, a ghetto resident Sara Yudkevich ran into the section of the hospital where Sadlij was working and asked for shelter, as she had realized the Germans were not going to deport them to Palestine, as previously announced. Sadlij was obviously too afraid to comply.[136] Sara Yudkevich was executed next day at the ravine near the village Zelenivka together with more than 8,000 Kherson Jews.[137]

Kherson Jews, however, were not the only group singled out for extermination. Communist resisters fared little better, having negligible local assistance. The partisan detachment under the command of Emelian Girskii, before the war first secretary of Kherson city Committee of the Communist Party, evolved from the Kherson destruction battalion, consisting predominantly of Communist functionaries, NKVD officers and Communist workers from the Kherson Petrovskii plant and the Comintern Shipyards.[138] On 19 August 1941 prior to the occupation of Kherson by the German troops, the

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[136] Zubris, "Ne zaroslo travoyu zabuttia," *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, 21 September, 1995.

[137] The testimonies of witnesses of the execution as well as conclusions of Soviet forensic experts are found at DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d.118; The Commission for the investigation of Fascist Crimes placed the total number of Jewish dead in Kherson throughout the occupation at about 10,000. According to the commission's estimate, about 8,500 were killed on September 24-25 at the Zelenivka ravine (DAKhO f.r-1479, op.1, d. 11, l.26).

[138] This follows from the testimony of Leonid Gubskii's, who listed prewar occupations of some of the partisans (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, ll. 10-11). The Girskii unit was one of many Soviet partisan detachments organized in summer 1941 under the auspices of the NKVD and the Communist party. See John Armstrong (ed). *Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Madison 1964); see also Mykhailo V. Koval' "Rik 1941-y: Partyzany Ukrainy," *Ukrains'kyi Istorychnyi Zhurnal*, (1996, #3): 53-61.

battalion crossed the Dnieper into Tsiurupyns'k, where the 250-man formation underwent reorganization, men unfit for the service returned to Kherson, while a few others must have been drafted into the Red Army or evacuated to the East.[139]

In the second half of September 1941 the units of the Einsatzkommando 10b, which came from Mykolayiv to carry out the "final solution" of the Jewish question in Skadovs'k and neighboring areas, learned that a group of armed partisans operated in the woods between Tsiurupyns'k and the village Chalbassy there operated a group of armed partisans. According to the Einsatzgruppe report, it "kept in constant fear the local population," or rather those locals who, being prone towards cooperation with the authorities, supplied the initial prompts.[140] The security units immediately interrogated several locals about the disposition of the partisans. They even found one person who agreed to take the German troops to the partisan camp.[141] In early morning hours of October 18, 1941 the Kommando led an all out attack on the partisan encampment and after a dogged engagement dispersed the unit, killing or taking prisoner a number of

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[139] Maria Bohats'ka remembered that her father, a member of the destruction battalion, returned to Kherson several days after the evacuation. DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.7-9; M.P. Morozenko, another member of the destruction battalion, mentioned that the future partisans were subject to a rigorous selection process and that being too old he was excused from the service (See *Khersonskaya oblast v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941-45*, Simferopol' 1975:76-77); according to the former partisan Khazanovich, at the time of its inception the unit comprised 48 fighters. Later a few Red Army stragglers joined the partisans. See *Khersonskaya oblast v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945*, Simferopol', 1975: 94.

[140] Klein, hrsg., *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 254.

[141] Ibidem.

partisans.[142] The interrogation of POWs revealed that many partisans had escaped, including three leaders of the detachment. Thanks to the cooperation of some locals, next day the Germans were able to establish the escape route of the surviving partisans. In the course of this second operation the Germans managed to destroy or capture prominent representatives of the local resistance movement—the 2nd secretary of the Mykolayiv regional committee of the Communist Party Vladimir Makeev, the Secretary of the Kherson city party committee and the commander of the partisan detachment Emelian Girskii, as well as the president of the Kherson Soviet of People's Deputies and the chief of staff of the unit, Aleksandr Ladychuk.[143]

The captured partisans were taken to Kherson prison.[144] There SD interrogators tortured them to uncover the identity and location of the few escaped partisans. According to Yakov Tkhorovskii, Kurochkin of the Ukrainian SD reportedly tied partisans Medvedev and Meshko to the bench and placed their fingers into the door crevice and closed the door. While the bones were cracking, the interrogator demanded that they reveal the names of other partisans.[145] The Communist Boris Tereshchenko, who before the war worked as a militiaman in Kherson managed to avoid capture at the time when Girskii detachment was destroyed by German security units. He made it back to Kherson and took shelter in the house of his sister Klavdia Tikhonova

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[142] Ibidem, 255.

[143] Ibidem, 256.

[144] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, ll. 10-11.

[145] Yakov Tkhorovskii heard about it from Dashkevich, the chief of the Ukrainian SD (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, ll.44-45).

(Tereshchenko). However, in late fall 1941 the Gestapo somehow learned about Tereshchenko's location. He soon found himself among other partisans in prison.[146]

The imprisoned partisans' tragic denouement came only in January 1942 and curiously coincided with the appearance of the resistance movement in the city and intensification of German reprisals.[147] According to the former partisan Leonid Gubskii, executions took place in two steps. The first party, consisting of eight Jewish partisans, was shot on January 3.[148] The second group of sixteen people, which included Gubskii himself, the above-mentioned Tereshchenko and Medvedev as well as two 14 year-old boys, underwent the same ordeal in the evening of January 10, 1942. A number of partisans, however, including Gubskii, Mikhail Medvedev and Ilya Kabakov were only heavily wounded. After the execution squad left, they were able to climb out of the deep trench that remained open all night.[149] Gubskii found shelter with some acquaintances and survived the occupation to tell the story; the fate of Kabakov is not clear. The fate of Mikhail Medvedev, however, was shocking even by the standards of the Second World War. After he struggled out of the trench, the heavily-wounded former kolkhoz-

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[146] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 16.

[147] See Chapter 3.

[148] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d.123, ll. 10-11.

[149] According to Leonid Gubskii, Yakov Kirzov and Nemytykh, former partisans who "betrayed the unit", covered the grave only next day. (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d.123, ll. 10-11). Gubskii does not provide any details as regards circumstances of the two men defecting from the Soviet cause or whom and how they betrayed. It is possible that Kirzov and Nemytykh were the two partisans captured by the Germans in the course of the anti-partisan operation, as they attempted to take intelligence information to the Red Army units, which was mentioned in the Einsatzgruppe report. See V.Kosyk, *Ukraina*, v.2: 28, Klein, hrsg, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 233. What later happened to Kirzov and Nemytykh I could never find out.

chairman from the village Antonivka crawled to the house of his brother, Andrei Medvedev, who was living a couple of streets from the execution site. The latter, however, refused to give shelter to his wounded brother, but turned him in to the SD instead.[150] Medvedev committed suicide before he could be arrested.[151]

One of the German leadership's most important objectives in the war against the Soviet Union was the ruthless exploitation of Soviet territory, its material and human resources.[152] In addition to long-range economic goals, in the short term the very success of the military campaign was deemed contingent on the ability of the German Army to live off the land.[153] However, shortly after occupying agricultural regions of

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[150] It appears that on the very same day that Andrei Medvedev betrayed his brother, the local newspaper "*Holos Dnipra*" on behalf of the German authorities published the following appeal to the population: "There is information that some residents of the city and the district shelter Communists in their houses. We propose that you should inform the district police within three days about the location of the Communists. We warn you that people caught hiding Communists will be shot together with them"(*Holos Dnipra*, January 11, 1942). One only has to wonder if Andrei Medvedev lost his nerve after reading this column.

[151] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, ll.10-11; DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l.24; DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, ll.44-45. According to Yakov Tkhorovskii, Andrei Medvedev was arrested by the MGB in 1944 and received a lengthy prison sentence. His subsequent fate is unknown, as he never returned to Kherson (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, ll.44-45).

[152] Alexander Dallin *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981, 2nd Ed: 305-319; Timothy Mulligan *The Politics of Illusion and Empire: German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1942-1943*. New York: Praeger, 1988: 107, Ralf Bartoleit, "Die deutsche Agrarpolitik", in den besetzten Gebieten der Ukraine vom Sommer 1941 bis zum Sommer 1942 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Einführung der 'Neuen Agrarordnung': eine Studie über die strukturelle Durchsetzung nationalsozialistischer Programmatik." M.A. thesis, Universität Hamburg, 1987: 32-53.

[153] See for example DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.8, l.70; T.Mulligan *The Politics of Illusion and Empire*: 94; Christian Gerlach *Krieg, Ernaehrung, Voelkermord. Deutsche Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Zuerich-Muenchen: Pendo, 1998: 13-29.

Soviet Ukraine, some members of the German military and agricultural planners realized the impracticality of the purely exploitative approach and advocated agricultural reform as a way to win peasants to the German cause.[154] In the long run the plans of the agricultural reform fell through because of the opposition of the powerful racialist lobby under H.Goering. The moderation reserved by some German experts for the Ukrainian peasants, however, never applied to residents of the Ukrainian cities, who, like the population of grain-consuming regions elsewhere in the USSR, were categorized as "surplus eaters" at whose expense the German *Ostheer* was to be supplied.[155] On July 24, 1941 the Agricultural Section in the Economic Inspection South (WiInSued Chefgruppe Landwirtschaft), the military-economic body, entrusted with food management in the Ukrainian sector of the German occupation before the civilian administration came to take its place in fall 1941,[156] instructed its subordinate offices (*Wirtschaftskommandos* or merely *WiKos*) that "the German authorities should bear no responsibility for the satisfactory provision of the urban population with food." "The military government of the occupied area", continued the document, "should immediately ensure that all the foodstuffs are stored in the guarded central cites, registered and protected from plunder or selling."[157] Another document from the same

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[154] See Dallin, *German Rule*, 327, Bartoleit, "Die deutsche Agrarpolitik," 76.

[155] Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernaehrung, Voelkermord*, 20.

[156] WiInSued Chefgruppe Landwirtschaft became AbteilungIIIb in the RKU on November 1, 1941. Similar transitions took place on the level of the Generalkommissariat, where the WiKO became Unterabteilung IIIB subordinate to Generalkommissar (DAKho, f. r-1824., op.1, d.11, l. 16). Gebietskommissariat Kherson was called into being on December 10, 1941(DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.11, l. 5).

[157] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.8, l.2.

office made the nutrition of the urban population conditional on availability of food after the German army needs had been covered.[158] The wartime destruction and the arrival of large contingents of German and Axis troops put much strain on the Ukraine's struggling agriculture. The influx of hundreds of thousands of Soviet POWs, captured in battles of the summer and fall 1941, aggravated the already complicated food situation yet further. In September 1941 the WiInSued reported that it was no longer possible to feed hundreds of thousands of POWs without simultaneously disrupting the provision of the *Wehrmacht*.[159] According to Christian Gerlach, the Germans responded to the problem by the ever more radical application of the "hunger plan" that had existed from the previous spring and now targeted Jews, Soviet prisoners of war and city dwellers.[160] With looted food and items for exchange on the black market running out, German-paid salaries inadequate[161] and many Khersonians to begin with unemployed,[162] many city

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[158] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.8, l.56.

[159] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.8, l.87.

[160] Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernaehrung, Voelkermord*, 36

[161] 28.10.41 SS Sturmbannfuehrer des Sonderkommandos XIa Zapp reported to his superiors on October 28, 1941: "From the conversations with construction workers follows that the salary is viewed as not corresponding to the market prices. A qualified worker earns about 20 rubles a day. This does not suffice to cover population need for food. Except for the groats, meat and fish that can be purchased in food shops, other products have to be procured at the market at fantastic prices. The products delivered by peasants do not suffice to cover the demand. 16 kg of potatoes cost 25-30 rubles, 1 liter of milk 5 rubles etc"(DAKhO, f. r-1824., op.1, d.4, l. 11).

[162] Elizavetta Kliuchareva's was a typical family. Her father did not work till winter 1943, when the Germans drafted him to work at the cement factory. Her mother stayed home all the time(DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.21).

dwellers had to go hungry in the winter of 1941-1942.[163] The erosion of the popular morale was accompanied by the deterioration of labor discipline and in the wake of Soviet successes in the Crimea also by growing absenteeism from the workplace, which the Germans countered with threats of the death penalty.[164] In Kherson workers were forced to sign papers that they were aware that shirking was punishable by death. The cases of absenteeism reportedly went down.[165] Another group of primarily unemployed Khersonians struggling to eke out a miserable living in the city increasingly migrated to the surrounding villages from early 1942, which enhanced German plans to build the region's agricultural base.[166]

Whereas the Kherson civilians had some caches of food looted during the interregnum[167] and could also avail themselves of the black market, which the German authorities unsuccessfully combated throughout the occupation, the Soviet prisoners of war were left with little alternative but a slow death from starvation. According to the Soviet estimates, in the city of Kherson alone between fall 1941 and fall 1943 over

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[163] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 5; A. Bakanovskaya wrote in 1944 "My mother did not work, nor did my brothers. It was very difficult to live. We had to sell things at the market. In the shop we received 200 grams of bread each and I got 100 grams. This was not enough, but we sometimes had to live on just the ration, as we did not have money to buy more food"(DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 32, l.11); Liubov Kompaniichenko corroborated this evidence "The ration. 100g bread for children, 200g for unemployed adults, 300g for working adults"(DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 32, l.13).

[164] In the first half of November 1941 the Germans executed Pavlo Zaikin for shirking from work. See *Holos Dnipra*, November 16, 1941; Also in *Khersonskaya oblast v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny 1941-1945.* Simferopol', 1975:98.

[165] DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.4, l. 16.

[166] DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.4, l. 16.

[167] See chapter 1.

40,000 POWs met an untimely death.[168] Although this assessment may be a little bit too high, we can say with confidence that victims in this category could not number less than 10,000-15,000 and were probably significantly more. With the exception of political officers, Communists, Jews and later also Soviet sailors who were promptly executed by shooting, the bulk of the POWs died from hunger, exposure and backbreaking labor.

The first POW columns started to arrive in Kherson immediately after the German occupation of the city. The arrival of the POWs inevitably caused hundreds of Khersonians to come onto the streets, looking for their relatives among the prisoners and bringing food.[169] As the captives wallowed through the city streets, they would frequently attempt to communicate with the civilians. Some POWs would even try to notify their relatives by writing notes and passing them to civilians on the road. Such endeavors, however, were pregnant with danger for the prisoners. Once, when the Germans were driving a column of the POWs to the camp, a large group of women was standing by the side of the road. One soldier in the column yelled that he was from Zelenivka and asked that someone inform his family that he was in Kherson. He began to write a note, but at that moment the German guard spotted the commotion and promptly shot the POW.[170]

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[168] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l.28.

[169] According to Elena Mokritskaya, who had husband and two brothers in the army, she did not miss a single POW column. Also she would frequently go to the camp fences (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 17).

[170] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 17.

Those soldiers, who were still alive following the march, would shortly find themselves in one of the city's camps. The Kherson branch of the Mykolayiv Stalag 364 came into existence following the German capture of the city in August 1941. However, it did not reach the peak of its prisoner population until the Soviet setbacks in the Crimea in winter-summer 1942. In its heyday the Kherson network boasted of three camps located in different parts of the city. Immediately after the Kherson camps came into existence, civilians would come to the camp walls with food, clothing and medical supplies No less significant for the purposes of this study was an improvised correspondence that the POWs established with local residents, which continued uninterrupted until the Germans evacuated the camps in spring and summer 1943, and allowed for a fairly efficient exchange of information. The correspondence usually took place in the form of brief notes that the POWs secretly exchanged with civilians.[171] Sometimes such notes would be tied to stones and flung over the fence separating the camp from the outside world.[172] In the absence of German guards the limited traffic must have also occurred at work outside the camps.[173] The contents of these messages

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[171] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 15; A member of the Pro-Soviet underground, Alla Dedova, relates that she used to have a lot of names and addresses of the POWs, but in 1945, when the former POWs were declared personae non gratae, she burnt all the addresses (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.146).

[172] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, ll.4-5; How difficult it was for the captives in the camp to engage in this sort of correspondence becomes clear from the testimony of the POW Saburov. A big problem was the lack of paper. A group of prisoners managed to get a piece of newspaper as if for wrapping tobacco. They also procured a pencil left-over, but the most difficult thing was to sharpen it. Eventually Vasilii Viazankin went to the shoe repair shop and for a cigarette got his pencil sharpened (DAKhO, f. 3562, op.2, d. 43, l.21).

[173] There were several such cases. The already mentioned Seraphim Saburov was among 10 prisoners selected by the Ukrainian camp interpreter to bring some sand

varied significantly from a simple statement of prisoners' names and asking for food and medication to elaborate plans of escape and Soviet underground leaflets.[174]

In summer-fall 1941 the German military embarked on a political campaign to release from the captivity non-Communist, rank and file Ukrainian soldiers with a view to using them in the strategically important industrial enterprises and the agriculture of the region.[175] A section of the local population took advantage of the German temporary complacency to procure the release not only of their relatives, but also strangers, including non-residents of the area. The prerequisite for the rescue efforts of this sort was the note traffic, described above. Some of the locals would come to the camp and claim the POWs, whose names they knew, as their relatives. A small bribe normally facilitated the process. In this way, according to Anatoliy Gramm, his acquaintance Egor Petrashkin bought out a POW named Vladimir, who in 1967 was still living in

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inside the camp from the riverbank in spring 1942. As they were going through the city streets, one woman raised her left hand and with her right hand imitated writing something on her left hand. Saburov wrote a note to his mother, which he hurled towards the woman during the second trip to the bank of the river. He saw the stranger pick it up. That woman's name was Anna Gubanova. In spring 1942 the Germans once again allowed civilians to bring food to their relatives in camp #2. Gubanova would shortly bring food packages to Saburov and a few other prisoners. She also enlisted the help of a number of her women acquaintances (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 43, l.7).

[174] Seraphim Saburov mentioned that in camp#2 they regularly received Pro-Soviet leaflets (DAKhO; f. 3562, op.2, d. 43, ll.9-11).

[175] On this topic see Berkhoff, "Hitler's Clean Slate", 374-376; By early 1943 in just 6 districts comprising the Kherson Gebiet, there were at least 1500 former Soviet captives working in the agriculture, while another 1300 worked in the industries. In February of that year, however, the German security would re-arrest many ex-POWs, although by any means all of them, and send them over to Germany (DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.95, l.14).

Kherson.[176] Nikolai Bukin was another fortunate Red Army soldier. The Russian-born Bukin fell into the German captivity in fall 1941 and landed in one of Kherson's camps together with his Jewish friend, a native of the city. His friend's wife, having learned that her husband was nearby, bribed the policemen, procuring the release of both her husband and Bukin.[177] Nikolai Titkov walked out of the camp after one Kherson resident "convinced" guards Titkov was his cousin. In his turn Titkov initiated the release of other former soldiers from his unit: Grigorii Kasparov and a Georgian called Shota.[178]

For the greater part of 1941 the Germans did not obstruct civilian efforts to deliver food to the camps. In fact, at the camp in Zabalka they would *accept* food from the population in an organized manner; however, it never reached the intended recipients, but instead landed in the German storehouse on camp territory.[179] Fortunately for the prisoners, the note-traffic was well established and Kherson civilians soon learned about

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[176] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, l.1.

[177] Pavlo Markobok, "I shcho zmohly zrobyly", *Nadniprians'ka Pravda*, March 12, 1994.

[178] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, l.1; Some of the locals, however, missed the right moment and failed to secure the release of even their relatives. Ekaterina Polivoda heard from some city residents that her brother, the panzer-officer Ivan Lopov, was somewhere in Kherson. The woman began looking for him. She would go to the camps and ask POWs about her brother. She found him only in winter 1942, when the German policy vis-à-vis Soviet POWs reached the apogee of its brutality. When Polivoda saw her brother, he was wearing just underwear and his hands were tied behind his back. Lopov called his sister, but the guards chased her away. The woman immediately enlisted the help of a *Volksdeutsche* policeman named Daniil, who lived nearby. At first he promised to help, but when she came to see him about the business several days later, he told the woman that Lopov had been transferred to prison and shot (DAKhO f. 1479, op.1, d. 123, l.34).

[179] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, ll.9-10.

the real state of affairs. The temporary solution to the problem was found in mixing all possible foodstuffs in a barrel, which Khersonian women then delivered to the camp gates[180] The barrel supplies, however, lasted only a short time, as the Germans clearly did not plan to feed the prisoners. Over the following days, the camp guards would disperse and even shoot at the people bringing food for the POWs.[181] Helping prisoners was thus no longer safe, and the German guards regularly beat the women.[182] Nevertheless food and medications continued to reach captives in more elaborate ways, being secretly thrown over the camp walls or sneaked through the holes that POWs would dig under the fence.[183] Commonplace became deliveries by children, who, it was believed, would be spared from abuse habitually meted out to the grown ups.[184]

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[180]Ksenia Vasiunina was one of the local women who would bring this mix to the camp: "We placed the barrels in front of the camp gate on the Lugovaya Street. Hardly had POWs taken barrels inside of the camps, as packs of other prisoners rushed at them, knocking each other off balance and spilling the concoction all over the place. Those, who did not get their share, had to pick up from the ground" (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, ll.4-5).

[181] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, ll.12-13.

[182] E. Sviridova mentioned in her depositions that such women as Ksenia Petchenko, Tina Myz' and Niusia Myz' many times were whipped by German guards at the camps, but persisted in their determination to feed the captives (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.167); The report of the Soviet Commission for the Investigation of the Fascist Crimes mentions the beating of E.Yakushenko and the teacher E. Shapoval for giving bread to POWs at the camp (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l.27).

[183] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, ll.4-5.

[184] Thirteen year-old Pavel Kovtun, whose mother belonged to a Soviet patriotic group, would frequently bring food to the captives held in the city prison (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.44). Although no source mentions beatings of children, they certainly were not spared from observing the abuse of POWs. One girl from Beryslav, one day took wheat and potatoes to the camp: "The captives encircled me, while the German began to beat them with the rifle butt. After one such hit, one of the prisoners fell to the ground and died immediately. The

While German orchestrated violence against non-Jewish civilians became frequent only in fall 1941, it had always been a characteristic of daily life of the Soviet prisoners of war. Specifically targeted were members of the Soviet navy, captured in the Crimea during the siege of Sevastopol'[185] whom the Germans slated for immediate execution rather than to death through hunger and labor. Some tried to protect themselves by dressing as soldiers, but because of the presence of informers in the camps the Germans frequently managed to expose their identity.[186] From November 1941 on, the imprisoned sailors would be routinely dispatched to the city prison and shot there.[187] Khersonians living in the Military Vorstadt would habitually observe shootings of Soviet sailors at the trench behind prison walls.[188]

Violence naturally did not limit itself to one particular groups of prisoners, but was a permanent fixture of the POWs' daily life. It was not uncommon for the German guards to beat, torture and even shoot POWs for minor infringements.[189] The camp

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German villain grabbed the bundle from my hands and threw its contents to the ground" (DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.30)

[185] The siege of Sevastopol' began in November 1941 and lasted till July 1942.

[186] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, l.1.

[187] Ibidem.

[188] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 22; DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l. 17.

[189] The German soldiers would habitually shoot POWs for picking food (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l.22); In another case the prisoner was shot for picking a chunk of coal at work (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l.28). Elsewhere the population observed how the Germans made Red Army soldiers lie naked on the ice or to stand 2 or 3 hours in a row with upraised arms (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l.28).

policemen were no less brutal.[190] One of the former POWs recalled Petr Perevezentsev, the chief policeman of camp #2 and the former Red Army officer, who enjoyed the reputation of being the ruthless enforcer of camp discipline:

> He beat POWs at every opportunity. He hit any area of the body with any object he had at his hand. Some POWs owed the loss of their teeth to Perevezentsev's fist. Particularly enjoyable to Perevezentsev was brutally kicking the POWs. If the POW were found guilty of something, he (Perevezentsev) would strike him several times with a whip or punch him and then order the hapless creature to run away from him. The prisoner would run, the sadist after him, aiming his kicks at the victim's tail bone or attempting to knock the man down with a kick to the back. Usually this sort of execution ended very badly for the POW. He would either be unable to get up for several days or else would never get up again.[191]

Although violence, disease and backbreaking labor claimed numerous victims among POWs, the greatest killers were hunger and cold. The Armenian Grisha Harutiunian was among some 10.000 POWs crammed into unheated cells of the city prison. Harutiunian, who must have arrived in Kherson sometime in December 1941, remembered that the POWs from the prison would

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[190] Some policemen were apparently not brutal enough. For his failure to comply with an order, the camp policeman Mykola Shchurov from the village Rybal'che, (Hola Prystan' District) was sent back to the camp and later released to work in the kolkhoz (DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.35, d.1, l.131); Shchurov's experience is an almost exact replica of that of Oleksiy Yaryha from Chulakivka (DAKhO, f.r-1501, op.3, d.10, l.67).

[191] DAKhO, f. 3562, op.2, d. 43, l. 13; One of the most common infringement was smoking outside the designated area. According to Saburov, because of the deficit of cigarettes in the camp, prisoners had to share. The cigarrette travelled from mouth to mouth and was thrown away only after all the tobacco had been used. After the toilet, the POW would carry the remnant of the cigarette to his comrades inside of the building. There he could fall prey to the camp policemen. If they managed to spot a POW holding a cigarette butt in his fingers, the cry "polundra" sounded over the camp and immediately 2 or 3 policemen would attack the wretched creature and beat him till they got tired (DAKhO, f. 3562, op.2, d. 43, l.14); Curiously enough the former POW Fedor Radov in summer 1944, as he was fighting in Belorussia, ran into the former Kherson camp policeman. Radov immediately reported the fact to his commander; the SMERSh arrested the former policeman (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, ll.6-7).

receive daily 170 grams of bread and a glass of water. Throughout his stay in Kherson Harutiunian's weight reportedly went down from some 90kg to about 40.[192] The situation was no better in the camp #3 located in Zabalka, were prisoners at times were fed with onion or potato peels, fish heads and even straw.[193]

Dozens of prisoners died daily in the camps of Kherson. Particularly heavy was the toll in winter 1941-42. According to the Khersonian Anatoliy Gramm, in camp #3 the frozen bodies of POWs would be stacked by the wall and ditched over the fence at night: "If the day happened to be frosty, then the grave would be full and if the cold held for several days, several graves would be filled".[194] During the period of the camp's existence the dead POWs reportedly filled 150 pits, 20-30 bodies in each one.[195] Sometimes guards and camp policemen would dump people who were still alive into the common grave.[196]

In light of these experiences it is not surprising that by January 1942, widespread anti-German sentiments supplanted the wait-and-see attitude that characterized Khersonians' reactions to the German occupation of the city and surrounding areas in August 1941, prompting a minority of Khersonians to

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[192] http://www.kontakte-kontakty.de/deutsch/ns-opfer/kriegsgefangene/reise_armenien_2003.html, November 27, 2003)

[193] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 31, l.1; DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l.21

[194] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, l.15.

[195] DAKhO, f.r-1479, op.1, d.118, l.21.

[196] This was witnessed by the Khersonian Galina Poltavchenko (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 15).

embark on organized resistance, once the fate of the Red Army began to improve.[197] Most importantly, however, a significant shift was taking place in the perception of the events by the population at large, manifesting itself in the rapid spread of rumors that Ukrainians would be next victims of extermination, just like Jews, Gypsies and Russian prisoners of war.[198] Having originated within the formerly apolitical local society, these rumors were primarily a reaction to the experience of the genocide, the lack of basic necessities and the unfolding tragedy of the Soviet POWs, to which Khersonians became witnesses and participants. Presently Khersonians would become susceptible to the political message of the burgeoning Soviet underground.

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[197]DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.76; DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.39; One of the statements from the winter 1941-1942 reads, "They talk about Hitler the Liberator. What did he liberate us from? We still have the collective farms. We can't buy anything, we starve and freeze and everything has remained on paper" (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.10).

[198] There also circulated popular rhymes like this one "Evreyam kaput, russkim tozhe, ukraintsam pozzhe" ("Jews are gone, Russians dead, Ukrainians not yet" (DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.11). Interestingly enough these lines came to the attention of GK Behrens, who quoted them in his report to his superior in Mykolayiv (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.39).

> Soon there started to arrive people evacuated by Germans from elsewhere. They related about German crimes, German torturing Soviet people. We eagerly read Soviet leaflets that the Soviet planes were dropping. But the Germans watched so that no body read them. They shot those people, who were found to be keeping leaflets. We longed to find out about the Red Army, but the Germans would not tell the truth. They only wrote that they pushed the Red Army further east, and then yet further. Then partisans brought us word that the Soviet troops were already in Tsiurupyns'k. We were so happy and everybody spoke about the near liberation from these butchers.
>
> Lidia Mel'nykova[199]

## Chapter 3

### The "Return" of *Homo Sovieticus*: Total War, Resistance, and Identity, 1942-1944

On April 25, 1943 a member of the Soviet underground organization in Kherson, Georgii Tsedrik, mentioned in his diary a conversation that he overheard on the city street. One of the women-interlocutors was quoted as saying: "ours retreated deliberately for us to taste some German rule and to learn to really value our Soviet government."[200] Pronouncements like these were not uncommon in Kherson in 1943, indicating a remarkable drift of the population towards re-identification with the Soviet state, a process that became noticeable as early as January 1942, but reached the stage of completion only after the Red Army recaptured the area in March 1944. This spontaneous "sovietization" of the Kherson body social did not take place in an

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[199] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.11.

[200] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, l.15.

ideological vacuum, nor did it affect all residents at the same time or to the same degree. We deal with complex processes of identity formation contingent primarily on developments at the Soviet-German front and the extent of individual indoctrination into the Communist *weltanschauung* before the war, but also on highly *subjective* experiences of German rule defined by the particular ideological milieu in which the residents of wartime Kherson operated. In the structure of the latter, along with the German and Ukrainian nationalist propaganda, the memory of the Soviet past and thoroughly internalized cognitive frames of a peculiarly Soviet kind continued to occupy a prominent place throughout the German occupation.[201] In the context of these past mentalities and against the background of the steadily radicalizing occupation policies in the years 1942-1943, there emerged in Kherson a pro-Soviet resistance movement, whose discourses, themselves a product of wartime experiences conceptualized within the frame of peculiarly Soviet beliefs, revitalized past identities by encouraging the bulk of the population to attach their survival modalities to the Red

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[201] Jochen Hellbeck, studying diaries of the Soviet period, recently made a strong case for the Soviet people's embrace of the regime's rhetoric as a way of looking at the world. According to Hellbeck, even when frustrated with the policies of the government, many people expressed their discontent within the boundaries of the official discourses, simply because no other cognitive frames had been known to them. See Jochen Hellbeck "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: the Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931-1939" in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed) *Stalinism: New Directions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000: 77-116. Sara Davies, for her part, cited evidence testifying to the separation between the elites and the population as indicated in the numerous complaints that the residents of Lenigrad filed in the 1930s. Her thesis, however, does not really contradict J.Hellbeck's, for although the people were indeed keenly aware of the existent gap, in their letters they frequently called on the elites to live up to the democratic ideals of the revolution, thus legitimizing the regime (Sara Davies, "'Us Against Them': Social Identity in Soviet Russia, 1934-1941" in Fitzpatrick(ed), *Stalinism: New Directions*, 47-70).

Army's military fortunes and interpret German rule in terms of the familiar Soviet patriotism if not exactly official Soviet narratives of the time.

A word of caution is due about some of the conceptual and methodological pitfalls awaiting students of popular identities in German occupied Ukraine. One of the major difficulties stems from the imprecise and fluid nature of analytical categories with which the historians approach the subject. I have in mind first and foremost the concept of "resistance" as an indicator of political identities, the concept frequently referred to both organized politically motivated opposition and the spontaneous actions in pursuit of essentially apolitical goals, such as individual survival. The difference of perspective, either institutional or temporal, complicates the problem further. The German occupation authorities, for example, would frequently describe in political terms *any* activities of the population perceived as a threat to security and deemed detrimental to the German war effort, implicitly imbibing those actions with certain political identities.[202] Similarly after the war Soviet civilians would often construct as "resistance" the wartime experiences that they did not necessarily perceive as such at the time.[203] The simple reshuffling of the terminology, for example, "resistance" for a

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[202] For example, the Khersonian Maria Barsuk was publicly executed as a partisan for digging out wooden poles used to support telephone lines, which she, apparently, used to heat her house (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 24).

[203] The best case in point is that of Gennadii Lebedev, during the occupation a doctor in Kherson hospital who participated in the work of medical commission deciding on the fitness of young Khersonians for a dispatch to Germany. Although it was not uncommon for the local doctors like Lebedev to accept bribes from the population in order to secure the exemption from the forced relocation, after the war they would present these activities as patriotically motivated (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.54, ll.106-109).

genuine political opposition and "sabotage" for other kinds of subversive activities, does not really solve the problem, for depending on the time frame, it was not uncommon for one and the same person to engage in both "sabotage " and "resistance", and more curiously still in "cooperation" with the German authorities. Such behavior was characteristic of many members of the Soviet underground who, in order to make a living, worked at German sponsored institutions and industrial enterprises before and often after joining anti-fascist groups. Needless to say "apolitical" Khersonians were even more likely to alternate "cooperation" with "sabotage" of German measures, depending on what best suited their interests at any given moment till late in the occupation. Should the above-mentioned episodes then be constructed as ruptures in the fabric of individuals' political identity? Do they indicate *a lack* of a clear political identity, as the Soviet authorities stipulated in the course of postwar verification of Communists' wartime conduct?[204] Or are they just symptoms of a basic conflict between personal and acquired group identities, the conflict that became extremely acute in the wake of Soviet military defeats but gradually lost its intensity and finally dissolved, as the majority of Khersonians began to identify the Red Army as a source of deliverance from the hated German occupation? In order to answer these and similar questions about the dynamics of identity transformation in the region I propose to examine local reactions to specific German policies in the context of discourses that accompanied and lend meaning to those actions.

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[204] See Weiner, *Making Sense of War,* 82-126.

In late December 1941-early January 1942 brutalization of Kherson civilians and atrocities against Soviet prisoners of war, documented in the previous chapter, acquired an additional *ideological* dimension. The rumors of the German defeat at Moscow and the initial successes of the Red Army advance in the Crimea, which the German authorities themselves recklessly publicized in the local press,[205] suddenly revitalized the remaining Soviet loyalists, who, demoralized by the Red Army defeats and fearful of the German reprisals, had remained politically inactive through the remainder of 1941.[206] By mid-January 1942, however, they would rally together in a number of underground groups, operating independently of each other at the agricultural school, the glass factory, storage factory and a few other enterprises.[207] Significantly, this movement was a totally spontaneous reaction to the oppressive German policies and despite postwar claims of Soviet propaganda,[208] no guidance or coordination, much less financial assistance was forthcoming from the Communist Party until February 1943 when Fillip Komkov (nom de guerre Mikhail Mechenyi), one of the leaders of the Mykolayiv Communist Underground organization "Center," recently devastated by the

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[205] According to Kherson *Gebietskommissar* Walther Behrens, the publications were first and foremost intended to inform the population about the atrocities of the Soviets, who shot collaborators shortly after expelling Germans from parts of the Crimea (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.11).

[206] Some of the future participants in the underground, like Komsomol member Elena Sviridova, even temporarily left the city to avoid the possible arrest (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.164).

[207] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.60,164; DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.32, ll.1-122

[208] See *Khersonshchina v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny, 1941-1945: Posobiye dlia propagandistov i agitatorov.* Kherson, 1970: 20-25.

German security service, escaped to Kherson.[209] A tireless organizer, Mechenyi would unite under the umbrella of the Kherson branch of the "Center" a number of still surviving patriotic groups that would continue to engage in anti-fascist activities till June 1943, when the organization "Center" was exposed and the core of its leadership, including Komkov-Mechenyi was arrested and executed.[210]

The emerging underground groups did not wait long to make their presence known. Before the month of January was over, in the vicinity of Kherson there occurred several armed attacks on the Wehrmacht personnel that left at least one soldier dead and few more wounded.[211] More importantly, however, as early as the first week of January 1942 written proclamations appeared in the city, detailing recent military successes of the Red Army and calling on the population to resist.[212] In response to the new situation

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[209] According to some members of the Kherson underground who heard the story from Mechenyi himself, the latter avoided arrest in Mykolayiv by the skin of his teeth. As the Gestapo agents came to arrest him in his apartment late at night, Mechenyi switched off the lights and opened fire. In the ensuing chaos he jumped out of the window in his underwear and reached the conspirator's flat. Very soon, however, he had to leave Mykolayiv for Kherson, as the Germans ordered all the lame people (Mechenyi's leg did not bend after sustaining a wound at the front) to report to the Gestapo for the checkout (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.57).

[210] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.53, l.97. The circumstances behind the destruction of the organization remain unclear to this day. In mid 1960s a number of surviving members petitioned the authorities to conduct an investigation and establish the name of people who betrayed the group to the Germany security service (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.136-137).

[211] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.4, l.15.

[212] *Holos Dnipra*, January 11, 1942. It is likely that the first leaflets were transcribed versions of the Soviet Informburo reports, to which the underground groups listened over the illegal radio-sets (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.146).

the Kherson Stadtkommissar Gustav Mattern ordered the population immediately to surrender subversive materials and threatened with death those caught keeping or spreading leaflets.[213] Parallel to these measures Mattern initiated the arrest of many former Communists and publicly executed six of them.[214]

The German reprisals did not succeed in terminating the activities of the resisters, but they did manage to reduce their scope significantly and drive them further underground. There is some evidence that in the wake of the executions members of patriotic groups would switch from distributing leaflets to oral dissemination of the contents of the Soviet Informburo reports both among the Kherson civilians and prisoners of war working in the city.[215] Once available to the population, discourses of the Soviet underground and relevant German newspaper reports combined to generate an unprecedented wave of campaign-related rumors that by the end of the month reached the far-most corners of the region.[216] In the process the rumors inevitably acquired a life of their own, as the anxious populace hurried to endow the news with additional meanings deriving from the interplay of such diverse discursive influences as

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[213] *Holos Dnipra*, January 29, 1942.

[214] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.11; *Holos Dnipra*, January 11, 1942.

[215] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.60; DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.146.

[216] On January 27, 1941GK Behrens'informed his superior in Mykolayiv about the rumors circulating in the region under his jurisdiction "Not infrequently one heard 'The Germans are going back. The Crimea is already in the hands of the Red Army, so is Kiev and from the end of December Mykolayiv and Kherson!'" (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.10). In the village Chulakivka, Hola Prystan' district, which did not belong to the *Gebietskommissariat* Kherson, similar rumors appeared in early February. It seems that they were brought from Kherson by peasants who went there on "business" (DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.35, d.1, l. 106).

the pre-war Communist indoctrination, wartime propaganda of the Germans, and other hearsay. In Kherson, for example, certain segments of the population came to believe that "the Soviets were so successful in the Crimea because they terminated Stalin's dictatorship and created in its stead a people's government, representing different walks of life. For this government all Red Army soldiers are willing to sacrifice their lives."[217] Aside from reviving the spirits and re-enforcing political identities of Soviet loyalists, the spread of anti-German discourses of this kind also had an effect on the behavioral patterns of the rest of the population, undermining the morale of collaborators and contributing to the deterioration of the already low labor discipline in the German-operated industrial enterprises of the city. These developments led the Kherson representative of the Economic Inspection South to conclude that "popular calm could be considerably increased if we managed to stop circulation of rumors about the local successes of the Russians."[218]

We know that following the halt of the Soviet counter-offensive in spring 1942, the population would return to the customary survival strategies that did not preclude cooperation with the authorities.[219] However, other factors that accounted for the recent turmoil, such as the oppressive German rule and the discourses of the pro-Soviet underground groups remained and their convergence would infrequently result in the

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[217] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.11. At the time similar sentiments were expressed in other parts of German occupied Ukraine. See Berkhoff, "Hitler's Clean Slate", 334-335.

[218] DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.4, l. 15.

[219] In his April 1942 report to the GenK Oppermann in Mykolayiv GK Behrens noted about the popular mood in the region under his jurisdiction: "Calm and order. The population goes to work. Only now and then is it possible to detect in cooperation with SD and Gendermerie signs of partisan activities, that are put a check to wherever necessary" (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.37, l.36).

politicization of people involved. In early 1942 the arena where such a convergence was most likely to take place became Kherson POW camps, where despite a recent volte-face of German policy prisoners of war continued to die en masse.[220]

The previous chapter illustrated how in summer and fall 1941 the Germans mistreated captured Soviet soldiers and crowds of Kherson civilians came to the camps looking for their relatives and bringing food, medications and other supplies. We also saw how, taking advantage of the OKH propaganda campaign, Khersonians proceeded to bale out of captivity their family members and soldiers whom they could pass for such. Because these earlier forms of assistance were half-sanctioned by the authorities, they almost by definition were *apolitical* acts that generally did not express any political identities. By winter-spring 1942, however, the activities of underground groops, the progressive deployment of violence against civilians bringing food to the camps and last but not least a much higher degree of political indoctrination among recently captured Soviet military, keenly aware of the plight of other POWs, combined remarkably to politicize the entire domain, gradually transforming POW camps into the major area of "sovietization" for many prisoners of war and civilians involved in the POW affairs. Let us examine the mechanics of this process.

Unlike the bulk of Kherson residents, who throughout the occupation partook in the fate of captured soldiers sporadically and on an individual basis, with the extent of

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[220] In late 1941 the labor shortages forced the Nazi leadership and the Military Command increasingly to use POWs as a workforce. This change of policy was followed by a modest increase in the rations. See Streit, *Keine Kameraden*, 145-148. In one Kherson camp the Germans even allowed locals to deliver packages for their relatives (DAKhO, f.p3562, op.2, d.43. ll.17-21).

their assistance contingent on the availability of food and other supplies,[221] the ideologically committed members of the underground turned the assistance to POWs into a centerpiece of resistance project early on, channeling towards saving their imprisoned countrymen much of their energies and limited financial and propaganda resources. As a result, in less than a year of its existence the Komsomol-dominated organization "Patriots of Motherland" that came into being in December 1941, alone boasted of saving the lives of about 100 POWs. Unquestionably radical, the group bears the distinction of being the only Soviet patriotic organization in Kherson actively to engage in the preparation of escape attempts as well as in occasional liberation of captured soldiers in the course of bold armed attacks. Perhaps the most spectacular feat of the organization came one night in summer 1942, when a group of armed youngsters led by 18 year-old Ilya Kulik broke into the hospital where the wounded Red Army officers were being kept. Having disarmed the German guard, they kidnapped 3 POWs, provided them with false documents, and continued to treat them in the houses of the organization members. Some of the liberated soldiers would join the ranks of resistance.[222] Shortly thereafter, the same group attacked the German guards convoying a number of POWs on the way from the oil refinery, where they worked, back to the camp. In the chaos that ensued several prisoners were able to run away.[223]

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[221] One boy explicitly stated what other accounts implied, namely that his family would bring some food to the prisoners, when they had any food to share. (DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1, d.4, l.13).

[222] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.32, l.5.

[223] Ibidem.

Although most of the underground groups did not display the daring and radicalism of Ilya Kulik and his friends, they did play a crucial role in the survival of many POWs, who managed to escape from captivity, providing them with addresses of "safe havens" and false identification documents.[224] No less important for the prisoners' daily struggle for survival was the organization of the relief effort by members of resistance, who regularly carried out agitation among the population to help prisoners with food and medical suplies and frequently took on the now dangerous assignment to deliver those to the POW camps and the hospital.[225] This leads us to examine the social impact of the German violence against civilians engaged in the relief effort at POW camps.

The specialist study that would deal with the problem in its entirety is yet to be written. The fragmented evidence available, however, allows to draw several preliminary conclusions. First of all, the systematic application of violence against civilians from late fall 1941 *probably* led to a drop in the number of people providing assistance directly. While a lot of Khersonians would continue to share with the prisoners the little food they had, the dangerous task of delivering it to the camps would be increasingly performed by members of the underground and those Kherson civilians who either had relatives in the camps or displayed a stronger ideological committment without being participants in the organized resistance. Clearly because of the entrenched sense of Soviet identity, some of these people would join underground groups, once the

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[224] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.60, 167; The most common practice, in which virtually all-underground groups engaged, was to procure old Soviet passports and after removing previous inscriptions with the help of chloride solution to enter individual soldiers' names into the documents (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l. 167; DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.32, l.43).

[225] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.60, 167.

opportunity arrived.[226] Finally, for our understanding of how political identity boundaries were being drawn in German occupied Kherson, no less important than what POW rescuers felt about themselves is what other Khersonians came to think of them. By fall 1942 both prisoners of war[227] and members of the Soviet underground, otherwise remarkable in their suspiciousness, began increasingly to perceive people involved in the rescue of prisoners of war as genuine Soviet patriots whom one could trust when in difficulty. Interestingly enough, Ilya Kulik, the young leader of "Patriots of the Motherland," after his organization was exposed and arrests began in November 1942 following Kulik's own bold attack on the German stuff car, sought shelter in the house of a Khersonian woman, who, he knew, regularly helped POWs. The patriotism of these people had its limits and Kulik, who, disguised himself as a runaway POW, was keenly aware of it. However, it was not fear that the woman would turn him over to the SD that motivated his decision to resort to the masquerade, but rather the apprehension that she would be afraid to give shelter to an underground leader, whose portraits had been pasted all over the city and for information on whom rich bounty offered.[228]

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[226] One such woman was Maria Budniak. Another was Aleksandra Gramm: both joined underground groups in 1942 following their intensive involvement in the fate of captured Red Army soldiers.

[227] POW Saburov mentions the notes from patriotic Khersonian Anna Gubanova, who would regularly bring food to the camp in spring 1942, when the Germans temporarily allowed Khersonians to deliver packages for their "relatives." One of these notes allegedly read: "I am sending you the dinner, tobacco and cigarette paper. Be firm, liberation is just around the corner. Let me know what you need." Gubanova recruited other Khersonian women who declared as their relatives POWs Klimentiev and Viazankin (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.43, ll.17-21).

[228] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.32, l.47.

The gradual politicization, however, did not limit itself to members of the underground and Kherson civilians participating in the rescue efforts, similar processes were taking place *inside* the camps. Unlike the prisoners released from captivity in fall 1941, the few POW survivors of the first winter of the war and prisoners captured at a later date displayed strong anti-German sentiments, sometimes endorsed by explicit identification with the Soviet government. The Khersonian Ksenia Vasiunina observed how in winter 1941-42 the Germans were driving along the Rabochaya Street nearly naked and barefoot sailors tied together with barbed wire. One of them kept yelling, "Comrades, beat the enemy! The victory will be ours, although we are going to die! Help the POWs, feed them, and give them whatever you can!"[229] In the Military Vorstadt in spring 1942 the soon-to-be executed sailors reportedly sang the "International," as the Germans dragged them to the execution site.[230] On the morning after one such execution took place, the Khersonian Nadezhda Ungurian discovered in her backyard a prostrate man wearing a sailor's striped shirt smothered with blood. Ungurian and her mother pulled the man inside their house and attended to his wound. It turned out the sailor was shot like his comrades, but being only wounded he managed to crawl from the ditch and to the nearby house. The women gave him civilian clothes and he soon left to look for the partisans, as he told them.[231]

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[229] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, l.2.

[230] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 22.

[231] Ibidem, ll.29-31.

Although of all the branches of the Soviet military, members of the Navy were probably the most thoroughly indoctrinated, yet by spring-summer 1942 personal experiences of the German captivity, knowledge of other POWs' predicament and the thorough-going propaganda effort within the Red Army units at the front reinforced by periodic penetration of the POW camps with underground proclamations[232] resulted in a significant amount of passive resistance irrespective of affiliation with any specific branch of the military. According to the pilot Serafim Saburov, a Communist Party member *from November 1941*, who was captured in the Crimea the following December, he and a number of his comrades were determined to escape at the first available opportunity, even though they had not experienced German captivity. The suffering of other POWs that they observed en route to Kherson camps only bolstered their determination.[233] The chance presented itself as Saburov's POW column was entering Kherson in March 1942:

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[232] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.146; DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.43, ll.9-11.

[233] Here is how Saburov described the tragedy of POWs working in the construction of the railway linking Tsirupyns'k with Perekop that he observed in March 1942. "Despite the cold, thousands of exhausted people with ice-cutters, spades and litters made way for the new lines. The POWs worked in the sectors assigned to every group. They lived here on the spot in the dugouts that they themselves built… The column was nearing the Dnieper. We could see two pontoon bridges. A terrible picture opened before our eyes, as we came closer to the river. Now we could see that the piles noticeable from afar were in fact stacks of human corpses. The Germans did not bother to bury the POWs who died from exertion and hunger while building the railway lines. The corpses were stocked on the bank of the river in the hope that spring floods would wash away the traces of the German crimes" (DAKhO, f. 3562, op.2, d. 43, ll.4-5).

On the sidewalks there stood civilians, intensely looking into the faces of prisoners. Willing to help, they would throw into the column bread, boiled potatoes (…) at that time I was as hungry as all POWs, but I was not interested in the piece of bread. All my thoughts revolved around one idea-escape! Escape no matter what! The column was slowly moving along one of Kherson's streets, when the front guard stopped behind to light his cigarette, covering his face with his palms. We were moving so close to the sidewalk that any POW, on taking 2 or 3 steps could find himself at liberty. It would not be a difficult task to get lost in the crowd for a POW wearing civilian clothes. Seconds decided everything. From the sidewalk only Yurchenko separated me. I did not have time to forewarn him. When just meters separated us from the turn I abruptly pushed Yurchenko out of the column and rushed after him. At that moment the abrupt 'Halt!' stopped me. I had to find my way out of the dangerous situation. Pretending that I tripped I fell to the ground. Then I got up, caught up with my row and squeezed into the ranks. The guard calmed down. Yurchenko remained standing on the sidewalk. He realized they did not notice him. He grew bolder and started talking with the guard, mixing Russian and German words. He was trying to explain something, pointing in our direction—"You see there is my *brat*, *bruder*. He is hungry. He wants to eat. *Essen*." Yurchenko was holding a loaf of bread and a pack of tobacco that he had just acquired from one of the civilians. The German realized the point Yurchenko was making. He picked the loaf of bread and gave it to Bychkov.[234]

Although quite common by spring 1942, these earlier, poorly prepared efforts to flee, mostly on the march or during work time to a considerable degree depended on chance. Some fugitives, like the above-mentioned Nikolai Yurchenko, were indeed lucky, but probably at least as many paid with their lives, as they attempted to flee.[235]

Running away, however, was only the first step in the prisoners' desperate struggle for survival. For the escape attempt to be ultimately successful, the fugitive POWs had to find a safe place to stay. Finding shelter was definitely easier for the locals, who could frequently stay with their relatives. Under

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[234] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d. 43, ll.5-6.

[235] The Khersonian Pavel Kovtun, whose mother belonged to the underground, related after the war about a runaway POW who once came to their house. The soldier told the family that there were three of them, who attempted to escape. Two of his comrades got killed and he alone managed to get away (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.32, l.43).

certain circumstances they did not even have to hide.[236] Many of the non-local runaways, however, had to rely on the assistance of strangers and that is where problems began for some of them.

Vasilii Viazankin was one of the few POWs to survive "annihilation through labor" during the construction of Tsirupyns'k-Perekop railway in winter 1941-1942. Completely exhausted, Viazankin was expecting to die very soon, but an accident intervened. One POW from their party decided to run away. Desperate he turned around and walked into the steppe. The man had covered some 30 meters, when the German guard noticed him. A quick sub-machine gun round felled the prisoner. The German then ordered Viazankin and another POW to carry the body to the stacks of other corpses on the bank of the Dnieper. After they battled through the 300 meters separating them from the river and succeeded in putting the body onto the stacks, both collapsed. In the evening the Germans took POWs to the camp and either forgot about the two prisoners or perhaps thought they were dead. As the two men regained their senses, they decided to walk away. After several days they were apprehended by the native police in one of the villages. Despite all the entreaties of the soldiers themselves

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[236] V.Nyzheholenko wrote that in December 1942 her father Mykhailo Terentiyovych Zadorozhnyi succeeded in his escape from the POW camp in the Mykolayiv region and came to his native village Dnipriany, Kakhovka district. Next day his wife gave the local policeman money and two golden rings to pay for his safety. (Valentyna Nyzheholenko, "Dlia nykh tsia nich bula ostannioyu," *Dzherela*, April 26, 2001).

and the local peasants, the policemen handed them both over to the German authorities.[237]

The first escape experience of Fedor Radov was as abysmal as that of Vasilii Viazankin. Radov was among five prisoners of war, who one day dug a vent from the trench in which they were sitting and ran away. Radov and another POW made it to the village Dariyivka, but there a policeman caught the fugitives and passed them on to the Germans, who transferred them to the city prison this time.[238]

Clearly more successful were prisoners that following their escape would go to addresses provided by members of the underground and freelance Soviet loyalists, where they would also obtain false identification documents, bolstering soldiers' chances of survival in the wake of an escape. The already mentioned Fedor Radov would shortly make a second attempt, but this time

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[237] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 43, ll.18-19; This mode of operation of the native policemen must have frequently been predicated by German orders. E.g. Gebietskommissar Alexanderstadt Friedrich wrote on August 20, 1942 that "following the arrest of runaway POWs it was established once again that these frequently worked at kolkhozes and other places without documents. Heads of Gendermerie posts and heads of local auxiliary administration are reminded once again that without documents nobody is to be employed. People without documents are to be handed over to the security police for the establishment of their identities" (DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.17, d.1, l.29). These steps were supplemented by the registration of the POWs already working in the kolkhozes. In some villages the registration was carried out in February 1942 (DAKhO, f.r-1520, op.17, d.1, l.131).

[238] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, l.2; There is reason to think Viazankin and Radov got off lightly. Two runaway POWs named Aleksandr Lysenkov and Vladimir Bessonov took shelter in one village in the Beryslav district. They stayed with the local people and worked in the kolkhoz. A few months later, however, the SD arrested them and the locals soon learned the soldiers had been shot as partisans (DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1, d.1, ll.125-126).

would go directly to the house of the Khersonian Ksenia Garnagina, whose address he found from one of the notes. There six more POWs were already in hiding.[239]

Passive resistance of POWs took on different forms, as manifested by the sluggish progress of the German effort to recruit volunteers for the Russian Liberation Army in summer 1942. The same Serafim Saburov remembered after the war:

> In June (1942) a German colonel came to the camp. He was speaking about the destruction of Soviet Russia. A liar! We had read Soviet leaflets and did not believe him. The colonel was speaking about the "liberation" of Ukraine from the Communist "yoke". He also mentioned the names of Khersonian POWs released from the camps (…) The prisoners kept silent. The majority did not realize what the German officer was saying. Exhausted, emaciated, hungry people waited for the order to disassemble. On the occasion of the high guest's arrival the camp administration increased the bread ration for every prisoner. The captives learned about it early in the morning and were looking forward to receiving the bread (…) Out of several thousands soldiers the Germans managed to recruit 7(!) volunteers.[240]

Even if the number of volunteers provided by Saburov is too low, it certainly illustrates rather accurately the difficulties that the German authorities experienced in 1942, as they attempted to enlist volunteers among the POWs and the local population either for service in the armed forces or in the police. Consequently, as early as spring 1942 the German authorities had to resort to the forced recruitment of young Khersonians to fill gaps in the auxiliary police

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[239] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 162, ll.6-7.

[240] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.43, ll.9-11.

forces.[241] Some youngsters subject to draft attempted to avoid the mobilization by running away into the *plavni*. The German search party discovered four such fugitives several days later, and following a brutal beating the teenagers were shot.[242] This is not to say that all people who ended up serving in the units of Schutzmannschaft did so because they were forced to. Clearly there were quite a few people who joined the auxiliary police of their own volition.[243] However, the same motives did not apply to all volunteers, for whereas some joined because of the benefits that the job offered, others had for altogether different reasons. As testimonies of some members of the Kherson underground indicate, in summer 1942 Liudmila Voevodina, the leader of a patriotic group at the Agricultural school convinced Fedor Nazarenko, a young Soviet soldier, whom she had provided medical aid at the POW hospital, to enlist with the auxiliary police force with the task to collect information and identify among the Schutzmaenner people who could be won over to the Soviet cause. [244]

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[241] In this manner the Germans recruited a number of former students of the Sea-faring school, where a member of the "Center" Georgii Tsedrik taught in 1942 ( DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, l.85). When in June 1943, the German SD arrested Tsedrik, escorting him to the SD premises was one of his former students, now a Schutzmann. According to Tsedrik, the young man clearly felt uncomfortable and mumbled all the time that he did not want to do it, but the Germans forced him to join. (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.73-75).

[242] DAKhO f. 1479, op.1, d. 123, ll.26-28.

[243] Among the documents of Ukrainian auxiliary police one occasionally sees applications for the service as late as the beginning of 1943.

[244] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.169-170.

The recruitment drives for the ROA and Schutzmannschaft both in the camps and among the civilian population of Kherson were indicative of a severe manpower shortage that erupted in Germany in late 1941 and among other things threatened the imminent collapse of the German wartime economy, unless some replacements were found for the German workers mobilized into the armed forces. Not surprisingly the Nazi leadership looked to resolve the problem by an ever more comprehensive exploitation of human resources in the occupied territories.[245] In order to deal with the task of labor management more efficiently, on March 21, 1942 Hitler authorized the creation of the Office of Plenipotentiary General for Labor Allocation under Fritz Sauckel.[246] As a result of activities of this bureaucratic structure, between April 1942 and November 1943 about 15,000 Khersonians found themselves on the way to Germany.[247] The following section of the paper will discuss the social impact of the Ostarbeiter program and its role in the crystallization of narratives of victimization that would play such a crucial role in the popular re-embrace of past political loyalties.

Although anti-German sentiments had already been running high in Kherson in spring 1942, when the German foreign labor program got off the ground, for a significant number of Khersonians security and well being of their own and their family

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[245] Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des "Auslaender-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des dritten Reiches.* Berlin-Bonn:Verlag J.H.W.Dietz Nachf., 1986: 145-147.

[246] Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945,* 429.

[247] DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 118, l. 28.

members remained overarching motives that at the time did not easily correlate with the interests of any "imagined communities." It is therefore not surprising that because of the rampant unemployment and lack of food in the city as well as limited financial benefits that the German authorities offered to the relatives of the so-called "Ostarbeiters," some Khersonians *agreed* to go to Germany.[248] Several months later, however, volunteers were nearly impossible to find. The reasons for the remarkable decline of even this limited cooperation are hard to pinpoint with precision because of the wide variety of individual experiences of German rule and more importantly because of a wealth of anti-German narratives circulating in the region from late 1941. Some of those discourses, like rumors about the poor conditions of transportation, working and living conditions in Germany, and cruel treatment by the German personnel, doubtless related to the concrete experiences of Ostarbeiter as reflected in the stories of handicapped returnees and in the letters that youngsters wrote from Germany.[249] However, in order to better appreciate different dimensions of popular hostility to the German measures, one has to place the above-mentioned experiences of Ostarbeiter and discourses that they generated into a larger cultural and ideological context that lend meaning to them. In the previous chapter we saw how the awareness

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[248]DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d. 109, l.21; The benefit for the relatives of "Ostarbeiter" was set by Reichskommissar Koch's order from February 27, 1942 at 130 rubles (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.109, l.1).

[249] GK Behrens in his report to GenK Oppermann mentioned the letter of Christine Bauer, a *Volksdeutsche* who went to work in the Reich. In her letter to her brother she unfavorably portrayed living and working conditions in Germany. Behrens proposed not to send *Volksdeutschen* to Germany, when one does not bother to provide them with treatment accorded to the German citizens He proposed to launch a propaganda campaign to show that V-D and Ukrainians are taken good care of in Germany(DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.30, l. 37).

of the German destruction of the Jews, Gypsies and Soviet POWs informed popular discourses about the general objectives of German occupation policies, which allegedly aimed at the eventual destruction of the majority of local population.[250] Thus, by October 1942, when the news about the death of some of the earlier workers began to arrive in Kherson, there had already existed frameworks that provided a clear and unambiguous explanation of recent developments.[251] These popular discourses, as evidenced by the text of the following proclamation from late 1942-early 1943, also made inroads into the written propaganda of the Soviet underground organizations, which in its turn became yet another outlet for the articulation of anti-German resentments and interpretation of the increasingly politicized reality:

> All of you have read the address of German authorities to Ukrainian youth, born in years 1922-1925. Soon after the mobilization our youngsters will be sent to work in the concentration camps and in German brothels. Fascists by any means available to them want to *destroy* (emphasis is mine) our young people brought up in the spirit of Communism and loyalty to the Soviet state who can become the reliable reserve of the Red Army. You all know from the letters of friends, brothers and sisters, from the stories of the handicapped who returned from Germany what conditions of life and labor are like for our people in Germany. Hundreds of thousands of young people have died from hunger, epidemics, back-breaking labor. Our answer should be: not a single volunteer for the work in Germany! Do not let them take you there by force! Avoid mobilization! Organize partisan groups! Policemen, sabotage policies of the German occupation authorities, make it easier to hide for people avoiding the mobilization and those who run away from the camps and assembly points![252]

Once anti-German sentiments became firmly entrenched and "codified," the anxious Khersonians would project their current resentments back in time, lending

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[250] See Chapter 2.

[251] The earliest notification about an Ostarbeiter's death I managed to find was dated October 6, 1942 (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.109, l.9).

[252] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 25, l.38.

contemporary meanings to experiences of past generations and then reconstructing those according to the rules of narratives of victimization that would then be used to explain the distressing reality. The young Tamara Safonova, for example, wrote in 1944 about a WWI veteran, evacuated to Kherson from Kuban', who happened to stay with the family in 1943: "He told us a lot about his life, about how he lived in the German captivity. 'Life was hard,' he used to say, 'the Germans are treacherous people, and we (prisoners of war) had to eat cats and dogs.'"[253] Whether such things normally happened in the German POW camps during the First World War and whether at the time the German military intentionally starved Russian POWs, is rather immaterial, for what matters here is that Tamara Safonova, living in hunger-stricken Kherson and attempting to avoid labor mobilization to Germany, never doubted that it was the case.

Tamara Safonova was one of many Khersonians who under the influence of concrete traumatic experiences of the German occupation conceptualized within the framework of available anti-German discourses, would attempt to avoid mobilization for work in Germany. One of the most common practices was to skip registration with the Labor office (*Arbeitsamt*), which from spring 1942 was made obligatory for all people older than 14 years of age. Zina Derkach avoided registration until July 1943, when faced with serious penalties she found some work in the agricultural colony just outside Kherson, from which the Germans did not mobilize people for labor in Germany.[254] Even more interesting is the case of Olena Burychenko; fearful that their

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[253] DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1, d.25, ll.13-14.

[254] Ibidem, ll.6-7; V. Sukhina was another 14 year old Khersonian who worked in the agricultural colony (DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.25, l.11).

daughter would be taken to Germany, her parents never registered her in Kherson. Secretly they took the girl to her grandmother in Tsiurupyns'k, where she also remained unregistered. Because they were afraid some neighbors would inform the authorities, the girl was secretly moved back and forth between Kherson and Tsiurupyns'k until late in the occupation period.[255] Zina Vorontsova's parents registered her as born in 1929 rather than in 1927 as was actually the case. It appears, however, that the trick did not work and the family had to resort to the assistance of a local doctor for expert advice on how to avoid the mobilization.[256]

The go-to person for Khersonians intent on escaping the deportation was a POW doctor Gennadii Lebedev, who left a valuable, if not completely sincere, account how his method worked in practice. According to Lebedev, 3-4 weeks before the departure date for Germany, the Arbeitsamt compiled the lists of candidates for the journey. In that period Dr. Lebedev, acting in conspiracy with an x-ray specialist, lab assistants and nurses would subject a potential candidate to certain procedures after which he / she would attend the medical commission with Lebedev's expert conclusion ready at hand. The most common techniques from Lebedev's arsenal included injecting small dozes of milk, sugar or kerosene under the skin of the patients that would shortly cause skin irritation and carbuncle-like inflammation. A less favored method was to teach a patient the symptoms of appendicitis and then inject milk in the area to imitate the actual inflammation, making surgical interference necessary. Finally it was possible to substitute the candidate's own X-ray shots with those of an actual tuberculosis patient.

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[255] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.18-19.

[256] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.94; DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.111.

According to Dr. Lebedev, in that manner he was able to excuse from mobilization 98 young Khersonians.[257] The only thing that Lebedev forgot to mention was that he and fellow medics did not perform these services for free, but charged the patients up to 10,000 rubles, a sum beyond many impoverished Khersonians.[258] What was left for children from the poorer families was either to go to Germany or find other, more radical ways of avoiding the labor mobilization, including self-inflicted mutilation. Nila Krivosheeva related that after a 4-month sick leave, her parents applied caustic soda to the hands of her sister, who was supposed to be shipped to Germany.[259] Oleksandra Muntian's 16-year-old sister had her hand scorched with boiling fat and then garlic was applied to the wound. When the German doctor examined the wound, he immediately found her unfit.[260] There is also evidence that some people drank "tobacco tea," that precipitated general weakening of the organism.[261] Others put some sort of medication into their eyes, causing themselves temporary blindness. Those who worked in industry

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[257] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.54, ll.106-109.

[258] A.Bakanovskaya wrote: "My brother was to go to Germany. He had unhealthy kidneys. My mother turned to a doctor for help, but the doctor demanded 10,000 roubles. My mother did not have that much money. Wherever she went, nobody was willing to help her. My brother had to go. When they issued an order to register kids born in 1928-1932, my mother would not take me to the Arbeitsamt" (DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 32, p.11).

[259] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.38-39.

[260] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.46-47.

[261] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d. 29, l.17.

would sometimes self-inflict bodily harm, like cutting fingers. Finally many people tried to hide their children.[262]

Not surprisingly in an environment in which virtually no one could feel secure from German arbitrariness, the population, particularly its younger section, would increasingly tie its hopes for the better future to the Red Army's combat performance. "My heart jumped from joy when I read in the newspaper that the 6th German Army was destroyed at Stalingrad" wrote the young Khersonian O.Borodavkin.[263] In the neighboring Beryslav District young people would get together in somebody's house and discuss what each of them had heard about the location of the Red Army.[264]

After hundreds of civilian refugees from the Kuban and ever-larger contingents of battered German and Romanian soldiers, began to arrive in the region from March 1943,[265] even anti-Soviet hardcores among the locals realized that Germany was losing the war, a perception that the state of morale and behavior of Axis troops did little to dispel. On March 12, 1943, Mikhail Mechenyi, the leader of the "Center" received a report from his agent about German soldiers exchanging personal items for alcohol in

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[262] Lidiya Melnykova for example wrote: "When they took children born in 1927 my sister also had to go, but we did not let her. We hid her in the dug-out. Every evening we brought her food and water and let her from the pit and in the morning she went back there. She stayed there before they carried away 1927" DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.7-9, 11; Also, the author's great aunt was being hidden (Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson Region, August 13, 2003).

[263] DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1, d.26, l.22.

[264] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.1, l.132.

[265] DAKhO, f. r-1824, op.1, d.95, ll.3, 9, 14, 18; DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.121, ll.1-2.

the villages around Kherson. They would get drunk and say: "Today we drink, tomorrow we are dead."[266] The drinking was accompanied by ever-more frequent "fraternization" of German and Romanian soldiers with some of the local women,[267] a development that caused a lot of concern to "racial puritans" among the German military commanders.[268] It seems only logical that some of these German soldiers in private conversations with local residents would express their willingness to desert and ask civilians to hide them before the Red Army took over the area.[269] Whereas some Wehrmacht troops still contemplated desertion in March 1943, HiWis in the Cossack detachments had already been doing it on massive scale.[270] The Schutzmannschaft battalion, infiltrated by the members of the underground who carried out propaganda among the Schutzmaenner, was now ripe with discontent and according to the underground estimates, there were at least 100 people eager to desert.[271] Romanian

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[266] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 25, l.20; Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova) remembered a German soldier billeted in their house in 1943. Talking to the 12 year-old girl in broken Russian, he would say: "Stalin and Hitler drink Schnaps, but simple folks, like you and I have to suffer." (Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, August 11, 2003).

[267] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 5; Interview with Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), Kherson, September 9, 2003.

[268] DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.66, l.1.

[269] *Khersonskaya oblast v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny 1941-1945.* Simferopol, 1975: 111.

[270] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 25, l.20. This trend continued in between March and October 1943 (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.115, l.18).

[271] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.170; The recently appointed GK Rodde indirectly corroborated the information from the underground sources in his report to GenK in Mykolayiv on February 15, 1943 "The surveillance of the black market is highly

soldiers and officers, never particularly staunch warriors before 1943, now displayed no willingness to fight whatsoever and would habitually engage in the shadowy deals with members of the underground that would send money and valuables into the Romanian suitcases and weapons into the underground caches.[272]

In similar manner Khersonians that had been walking a tightrope of cooperating with the occupation authorities ever since 1941 displayed an increasing propensity to cast their lot with the Soviet side and in many cases developed a genuine sympathy with the Soviet cause rather than acting out of pure opportunism, as K.Berkhoff intimated in his pioneering study of Ukrainian society under German rule.[273] The former Soviet loyalist, Red Army soldier, deserter/straggler and German collaborator (as an engineer at the Kherson Shipyards) Georgii Tsedrik was one of the people attracted to the message of the underground. It appears that sometimes in early 1943 Tsedrik received a "Center" leaflet from his young neighbor Maria Bukatsel', whom he was able to persuade to reveal the source of the leaflet. The young girl quite carelessly agreed to organize Tsedrik's meeting with one Veselov, the leader of the "Center" cell at the

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problematic. The Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft battalion is very undisciplined and according to the information from the SD not only it is unreliable, but also must be perceived as a potential danger" (DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.95, l.11). The SD swooped on the unreliable Schutzmaenner in May 1943. Arrested and executed were Beliaev and Poliakov, but Nazarenko managed to run away and forewarned Sviridova and Voevodina about the upcoming arrests (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.176-178).

[272] DAKhO, f.p.3562, op.2, d.47, ll.33-35; According to Yakov Tkhorovskii, he and his son bought from Romanians 21 rifles and 4 shotguns (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.33).

[273] Berkhoff, "Hitler's Clean Slate," 338-342.

electric station, who on behalf of the organization instructed Tsedrik to organize a cell and spread leaflets at the Kherson Shipyards, where Tsedrik continued to work.[274]

No less interesting was the spiritual path into the Soviet underground community of Yakov Tkhorovskii, whose earlier wartime career suggested that he was an extremely unlikely candidate for the role. In summer 1941 Tkhorovskii did not evacuate from soon-to-be-occupied territory of the region; instead, once the Germans arrived, he put to work his impressive entrepreneurial skills. Tkhorovskii's retail business was doing really well, in part because of his close association with Dashkevich, the chief of the Ukrainian SD in Kherson, who became a permanent customer of the café that Tkhorovskii owned.[275] In spring 1943, however, Mikhail Mechenyi through his emissaries established contact with the businessman and made him a proposition to provide funds for the financially struggling organization.[276] Since the prospects of a German defeat were looming large, the successful entrepreneur thought it wise to accept the offer. Presently, Tkhorovskii's involvement in the underground reached as far as voluntarily supplying Komkov-Mechenyi with information that he garnered from the conversations with his buddy Dashkevich as well as personally disseminating propaganda leaflets of the "Center" during business trips to neighboring villages.[277] How people reacted to the message of the Soviet propaganda becomes clear from the testimony of Georgii Tsedrik who in March 1943 gave a leaflet to his colleague

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[274] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.47, l.86.

[275] DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, ll.44-46.

[276] Ibidem, l.32; DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 53, l.89.

[277] Ibidem, ll.34-35.

Anatoliy Syrovatko: "One should have seen how greedily he (Syrovatko) read it and how his eyes were burning. -- "I have never had a chance to read such leaflets," he would say.[278]

The process of spontaneous "sovietization" of the region was also marked by a reconfiguration of popular attitudes towards Jews and native collaborators. As shown in the previous chapter several hundred Jewish women escaped the initial extermination because they were married to Ukrainians and subsequently converted to Christianity. From early 1943, however, such marriages no longer offered adequate protection, as Walther Rodde, who took over Gebietskommisar Walther Behrens in January 1943, wished to liquidate also 150 Jewesses in mixed marriages, because " in these critical times the Jews remain as dangerous as ever."[279] The housing shortage that erupted in the wake of the arrival of large contingents of German troops in Kherson in spring 1943 provided the impetus for final extermination of Jews together with their gentile spouses and children.[280] This action began on May 13, 1943.[281] This time, however, Jews had a better chance to survive than they did in fall 1941, largely because of the consolidation of the patriotic segment of the population, united in several underground groups, as well as higher levels of social solidarity among the locals. The Russian Georgii Fedorov,

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[278] Ibidem, l.6.

[279]DAKhO, f.r-1824, op.1, d.95, l.2.

[280] Among the executed Ukrainians was Oleksandr Khomenko, who was shot along with his Jewish wife and two children (DAKhO, f. r-1479, op.1, d. 123, l. 14).

[281] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, l.23.

whose wife was Jewish, had been lucky enough to identify sympathetic Khersonians earlier. Sometime in December 1941 he met Avtiukhov, a bookkeeper at the Kherson conservation factory, to whom Fedorov confided his fears and who told Fedorov that in case of danger they should immediately come to his place.[282] Georgii Fedorov remembered:

> That morning (May 13, 1943) our old neighbor Efrosinya Fedorovna Taranenko rushed into our apartment in the state of extreme anxiety. She told us we should run for our lives, for the Gestapo had just taken away another Jewish neighbor with her husband. We left everything behind and immediately set off. Together with our 11-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son we stayed with my mother. For two weeks we did not venture outside. From there we moved to the Military Vorstadt, where I rented a room, having paid for several months in advance. We lived there unregistered (nepropisannye). Less than a month later, the Gestapo came after us, but they did not know the exact address, so they went along the street and asked people if they had seen a dark Jewess with two small children. But the neighbors had given us a warning before the Gestapo came near. From there we fled to Avtiukhov.[283]

Not only were Khersonians now more willing to help the Jews, they were also more prone to look down on the few hardcore collaborators, who were increasingly alienated not only from the bulk of local residents, but often from their family members as well.[284] Yakov Tkhorovskii remembered meeting in spring 1943 in the village Kalinindorf his prewar acquaintance, a daughter of the local policeman Mamai who had

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[282] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, l.23; This is confirmed by Avtiukhov (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, l.62).

[283] Ibidem, l.23.

[284] Elena Sviridova mentioned a Khersonian woman, a participant of the patriotic group, who grew to hate her husband, an SD investigator, for what he did (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.168).

distinguished himself by active participation in the Holocaust.[285] As they started to talk, the girl opened up to Tkhorovskii:

> I am a Komsomol member, but what my father does is terrible. My mother is wasting away from constant worries. I meet young people, but it seems everybody despises me because of my father, who is racing around the countryside, looking for Jews, whom he arrests and the Germans kill. Here everybody is waiting for "ours." I would like to join the underground, but everybody is afraid of me because of my father.[286]

Thus by spring 1943 the shift of political loyalties in the region was largely completed. With the exception of collaborators and a few local residents who turned to the Ukrainian Nationalist vision,[287] the bulk of Khersonians looked forward to the arrival of the Red Army. Naturally under the harsh conditions of the German rule such sentiments were not expressed openly, and the chance that they would translate into patterns of resistance were miniscule, particularly after the underground organization "Center" was crushed by the SD in May-June 1943, following the detention of several members who under duress named other participants, initiating a chain of arrests. The majority of Khersonians simply tried to survive, sabotaging German orders whenever possible, and complying with them whenever necessary. Such a situation lasted until November 1943.

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[285] See the Commission's for the Investigation of Fascist Crimes list of perpetrators (DAKhO, f.r-1479, op.1, d.54, l.2).

[286] Tkhorovskii gave the girl a few "Center" leaflets to disseminate among young villagers, only to find out a few months later that Mamai found them in his daughter's room and personally shot her (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.36).

[287] Yakov Tkhorovskii mentioned his acquaintance Mykyta Kutsenko, who in a conversation with Tkhorovskii spoke about the prospects of Soviets and Germans fighting each other to a standstill and an independent Ukrainian government filling the power vacuum. According to Tkhorovskii, Kutsenko was arrested after the war by the MGB (DAKhO, f.p-3562, op.2, d.26, l.34).

As the Red Army units approached the area, on November 3, 1943, the German military commander announced the obligatory evacuation from the city of all males aged 14-65.[288] The overwhelming majority of local men, however, failed to comply with the orders to assemble at the special collection point.[289] Some people set out for the nearby villages,[290] others were hiding at home in the dug-outs prepared in advance,[291] still others went into the *plavni* with an intention to cross over to the Soviet side.[292] We know for a fact that several Khersonians and former POWs would indeed succeed in reaching Tsiurupyns'k, where the Red Army units were stationed at the time.[293]

Several weeks later, on December 8, there followed a general evacuation order that provided for the removal of all civilians regardless of age or sex. Carrying bundles with scanty possessions, soaked by the cold rain, people would walk in the direction of Mykolayiv.[294] "They were driving us like cattle, not like people. We walked for four days and nights. For the night they would put us into stables. We received no food. On

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[288] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, l.80; DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.25, ll.6-7.

[289] Vadon, *Okkupatsiya Khersona*, 5.

[290] DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1, d.25, ll.11-12.

[291] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.12, 15, 22, 52.

[292] Ibidem, ll.38-39.

[293] The former POW Viktor Shurov was one of many Khersonians who rushed into the *plavni*: "On the island there were other people, but because we all were afraid of the possible chase, we avoided each other. We would spent all night in a boat found in the plavni, looking for the stream that would take us to the Soviet troops. We eventually succeeded." (DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, l.15).

[294] DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.25, l.15.

the fifth day we ran away," wrote young P. Steshenko.[295] Such experiences were commonplace.[296]

For those Khersonians who managed to avoid round-ups, having taken shelter in secret hide-outs within the city, liberation would not come for more than two months. In the meantime food frequently ran out, and the people had to leave their shelters prematurely, subjecting themselves to a risk of being shot or sent on a foot march towards Mykolayiv.[297] Sometimes, these hide-outs were discovered by the Germans, in which case their inhabitants were either shot or after decent portion of beating directed to the special assembly points, from which they were then marched further west.[298] When on March 13, 1944 the Red Army finally captured Kherson, the Soviet soldiers found the city largely bereft of its residents. It would take weeks, sometimes months before the Khersonians, uprooted by the German evacuation policy, finally had a chance

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[295] Ibidem, l.28.

[296] Ibidem, l.10; Interview with Valentina Zamiralova (Gubenko), Kherson, September 9, 2003; Interview with Nadiya Mel'nyk (Lytvynova), Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, August 13, 2003.

[297] DAKhO, f. p-3562, op.2, d. 26, l.82. Elizavetta Kliuchareva recalled: "We all hid in the cellar for 1.5 months. Then the food and kerosene ran out (… ). We had to come out. As we approached the slaughterhouse, the Germans noticed us and began to shoot. We stopped. Two German soldiers ran towards us and started beating my father. We were all crying. They took us all to the camp" (DAKhO, f.r-3497, op.1, d.27, ll.20-22).

[298] Elizavetta Kliuchareva's uncle, who remained in the cellar after they left, was later discovered by the Germans and killed (DAKhO, f. r-3497, op.1, d.27, l.22). The Soviet Commission for the Investigation of Fascist Crimes established that in the period of forced evacuation eight Kherson civilians were executed at the bread factory in the Military Vorstadt (DAKhO, f.r-1479, op.1, d.118, l.27).

to welcome the Red Army soldiers as liberators in villages around Kherson, or as far away as Mykolayiv and Odessa.

Summing up, in the final chapter of the thesis I have argued that steadily radicalizing German occupation policies, which at some point between August 1941 and November 1943 negatively affected almost every resident of the area, and narratives of victimization circulating in the region at the time, actualized past political loyalties of the population, who in the *absence of any viable political alternative*, would turn to nostalgia for the Soviet past, and increasingly to Soviet propaganda, as a way to articulate their resentment of the present German rule. Consequently, by January 1942 a pro-Soviet resistance movement began to develop in Kherson, whose discourses themselves a product of war experiences refracted through a peculiarly Soviet kind of subjectivity, in the next year and a half proceeded to politicize the other Kherson civilians and POWs in the city camps, greatly expediting popular identification with the Soviet state and the Red Army, now increasingly perceived as the sole force capable of delivering the population from the ordeals of the German occupation.

## Conclusion

Folowing the German invasion of Soviet territory on June 22, 1941 in Ukraine's Kherson region, as elsewhere in the USSR, there began a general mobilization of the population for service in the armed forces and in the units of the labor army. A staggering number of Khersonian men and women joined voluntarily, unwittingly testifying to the success of the sovietization of the Ukrainian hinterland in the twenty four years since the Revolution. Patriotic unity, however, proved short-lived, as German air-raids, accompanied by the arrival of wounded Red Army soldiers and refugees from Western regions of the USSR, prompted hundreds of Khersonians to evacuate or escape from the area that was about to fall to the Germans. While civilians fled for their lives, Red Army soldiers deployed in the region were increasingly prone to desert. Although some of the deserters belonged to the groups formerly persecuted by the regime and could qualify as potentially anti-Soviet, there is reason to think that most of the soldiers abandoned the battlefield due to their frightening combat experiences and the seeming inevitability of Soviet defeat, accentuated by the German propaganda leaflets, increasingly available to the troops at the front and civilian population. The growing tension between personal and acquired Soviet identities also come up quite conspicuously in the panicky withdrawal of the Soviet authorities from Kherson in the face of the German invasion, as well as in the looting that ensued in the city divested of any authorities.

The reality of the Red Army defeat and German propaganda thus seriously undermined the "imagined community" of the Soviet people, leading to multiple

divisions that revealed themselves clearly in the course of German extermination drives in September-October 1941. A minority of locals engaged in the persecution of Jews and Communists actively, while others, either because of their anti-Semitic/anti-Communist disposition or because of the general propensity to collaborate with any authorities, contributed to the "success" of German extermination policies by denouncing members of the persecuted groups. Still, it would be unfair to overlook the trends within the local society in opposition to the German genocidal projects and anti-Semitism of the fellow Khersonians. While these people as a rule remained passive, generally it was not sympathy with the German measures that prevented them from intervening on behalf of Jews or other victims of National Socialism. Characteristically, once the Germans *allowed* Khersonians to adopt Jewish children legally, quite a few of them did.

The significance of the Holocaust, however, goes far beyond revealing the fragmentation of the Kherson body social. Above all else, it informed popular opinion about general directions of German policies, which coupled with the prewar Soviet indoctrination, awareness of the German destruction of POWs and the intentional withdrawal of food from the city by the German authorities, contributed to the spread of anti-German sentiments that by January 1942 reached serious proportions. In this situation, news about the Red Army successes at Moscow and in the Crimea led some younger Khrsonians to begin organized resistance. Supplying assistance to the POWs and engaging in the dissemination of rumors and written propagada, the members of the resistance contributed to the politicization of the Kherson civilians, helping them to articulate numerous grievances that only grew as the war dragged on. Given the

previous exposure of the population to the peculiar cognitive frames of the Soviet kind, once it became clear in 1943 that Germany was losing the war, the majority of Khersonians proceeded to rediscover their past political loyalties.

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